

A3 Safeguarding in Online and Hybrid Activities

Acceptable use · Photo and media consent · Online session safety · Reporting online concerns

Purpose

Digital communication and online activity are part of most projects today. Online and hybrid formats introduce specific safeguarding risks: reduced visibility, potential for inappropriate digital contact, and difficulty controlling who can access a digital space. This document provides guidance on: setting up safe online sessions; acceptable use standards; photo and media consent; and responding to online safeguarding concerns.

For online activities involving under-18 participants, this document is read alongside R3 (Child Protection Measures Section 6 and 7), which includes child-specific requirements.

1. Before Any Online Session

Task	Responsible person
DSL has approved this online session format and the acceptable use policy	DSL
All staff and volunteers facilitating online sessions have completed P3 induction	DSL
Ground rules agreed with participants in advance (see Section 3)	Facilitator
At least one moderator identified and briefed for each session	Facilitator
Photo, video and media consent obtained from all participants (R2 Form C)	Project coordinator
Session platform selected: all external chat features disabled where possible; waiting room or equivalent enabled	Facilitator
Session timing confirmed: avoid late-night sessions (see Section 2)	Facilitator
For under-18s: parental consent for online session participation obtained	Project coordinator



Funded by
the European Union

www.safe-spaces.eu

For under-18s: two adults assigned to each session (facilitator + moderator)

DSL

2. Session Timing and Scheduling

Online sessions should be scheduled at times appropriate to the participant group:

- Avoid sessions that run after 21:00 in the participant's local time zone. For under-18 participants, avoid sessions after 20:00. The reduced visibility and informal atmosphere of late-night digital contact increases risk.
- For cross-timezone groups: agree a session time that falls within normal working or programme hours for all participants. Avoid early morning or late evening for any participant group.
- Sessions should have a defined start and end time, communicated to participants in advance.
- Record sessions where possible. Inform participants at the start of the session that it is being recorded. Retain recordings for the project retention period.

3. Online Session Ground Rules

Share the following ground rules with all participants before the first session and display them at the start of each session:

Online Session Ground Rules

- Treat everyone in this session with respect.
- Keep what other participants share in this session confidential within the group.
- No recording of sessions by participants — only the facilitator records, where agreed.
- No screenshots of other participants without their consent.
- Use your real name on the platform.
- No sharing of your screen without the facilitator's permission.
- If you feel uncomfortable at any point, you can leave the session. Contact [DSL name, contact] as soon as you are able — within the same session or the same day.
- Safeguarding still applies online. If something happens in this session that concerns you, tell [DSL name].

[Add any project-specific rules here]

For online activities involving under-18s: review the child-specific ground rules and requirements in R3 Sections 6 and 7. Share ground rules with parents and participants before the first session.

4. Acceptable Use Standards

All participants, staff, volunteers and partners in online activities agree to the following:



Funded by
the European Union

www.safe-spaces.eu

- Official communication channels only: no personal social media direct messages, personal email or personal messaging platforms (e.g. WhatsApp personal accounts) for project-related communication.
- No contact with participants outside officially scheduled sessions or through unofficial channels.
- For under-18 participants: adult staff and volunteers must not have private online contact with under-18 participants through any channel, unless a documented professional reason has been agreed with the team and the DSL. See F2 (Code of Conduct) Section 3.2.
- No sharing of offensive, sexual, violent or discriminatory content in any project communication channel.
- Any concern about another participant's online behaviour is reported to the DSL as soon as you are able — within the same session or the same day.

5. Photo, Video and Media Consent for Online Settings

Online sessions may generate images, video recordings and chat logs. These are personal data.

- Obtain R2 Form C (Photo, Video and Media Consent) from all participants before any session where recording or images may occur.
- Inform participants at the start of every recorded session that it is being recorded. Participants who do not consent to recording may turn off their camera.
- Recordings are stored securely, accessed only by the DSL and facilitator, and deleted after the retention period.
- Screenshots and recordings of sessions may not be shared publicly without explicit consent from all participants who appear in them.

6. Responding to Online Safeguarding Concerns

Online safeguarding concerns may include: inappropriate messages between participants or from a staff member/volunteer to a participant; exposure to harmful content during a session; a disclosure made in a group chat or private message; grooming behaviour observed in digital communication; or a participant sharing content that indicates they are at risk.

Concern type	
Inappropriate message in a group chat or session	Screenshot with timestamp. Report to DSL as soon as you are able. Do not delete or discuss in the group.
Private message of concern (to you or from a participant you have been made aware of)	Screenshot with timestamp. Report to DSL. Do not forward to others.
Disclosure during a live online session	Pause the session briefly if possible. Follow I3, Chart 1 — Disclosure, Steps 1–5. If the concern requires immediate action, end the session early. Report to DSL.
Concern about grooming behaviour	Do not confront. Screenshot evidence. Report to DSL as soon as you are able.

Participant appears distressed during a session

Contact the participant through an official channel after the session. Ask how they are. If concerned, report to DSL before the end of the day.

References

R2 Form C (Photo and Media Consent). R3 Sections 6 and 7 (Online activities involving under-18s). F2 Code of Conduct Section 3.2 (Digital boundaries). I3, Chart 1 — Disclosure (Disclosure response). P3 (Induction Pack). O3 (GDPR — digital data). Glossary of Key Terms (Safe Spaces) — for definitions of all bolded terms in this document.



Funded by
the European Union

www.safe-spaces.eu

© Safe Spaces, 2026. This material is released under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0). Permission is granted to utilize, modify, and translate these resources for organizational use, provided the Safe Spaces project is formally credited. Access the complete toolkit at www.safe-spaces.eu.

Financial support provided by the European Union. Production of this document by the European Commission does not imply endorsement of the material; the perspectives expressed belong solely to the authors. Neither the National Agency nor the Commission accepts liability for any application of the information provided.



Funded by
the European Union

www.safe-spaces.eu