

# Awareness Concept for the Conference "Let's Socialize"



15 - 17 March 2024

## 1 Understanding

### 1.1 What is Awareness?

The term "awareness" is derived from the English verb "to be aware" and means to be conscious and attuned to one's surroundings. For us, awareness means paving the way for a more collaborative and sensitive way of working together. This requires constant critical self-reflection and the recognition of power relations and one's own privileges. Power relations can exist both on an individual level and on a societal-structural level.

We are all part of discriminatory structures within which we have been socialized. We therefore all (un)consciously produce and reproduce various forms of this kind of violence.

We are aware of this and try to work against these internal structures through continuous education, reflection and exchange. It is important that we listen to people affected by violence and take their perspectives and realities into account. At the same time, we can reveal our own privileges and discrimination by communicating transparently in an attempt to expose and address these inherent forms of violence in a spirit of solidarity and by taking individual actions.

There is always an interaction between the individual and structural level, which will therefore also influence the institutional level in the long term. Within the framework of the conference, we can attempt to act inclusively and in solidarity as well as in an anti-discriminatory and power-sensitive manner in individual situations and at the structural level of the conference.

We therefore invite all participants, the organizers and the workshop leaders of the conference to familiarize themselves with the work of the awareness team and to critically question us. We welcome all forms of constructive criticism and feedback. We always try to keep our own social positioning in mind in order to live up to our own expectations. We might not always realize when we are reproducing violent structures that we carry within us. We therefore encourage everyone to create a critical learning environment within which we can learn from each other and transform ourselves and our social spaces.

## **1.2 Why Awareness?**

The purpose of awareness initiatives is to cultivate an environment where individuals of all backgrounds can experience comfort, freedom, and safety, irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, skin color, origin, appearance, or physical abilities. These efforts aim to proactively prevent instances of transgression and (sexualized) violence by fostering an understanding of societal structures and promoting introspection. In the event that such incidents do arise, trained personnel are available to offer guidance, support, and, if necessary, assistance to those affected.

From the perspective of power criticism, it is imperative to acknowledge the pervasive presence of historical inequalities, power dynamics, and various forms of violence across all facets of our society. Consequently, no individual remains untouched by the deeply ingrained disparities within our social fabric. Discrimination and breaches of boundaries may therefore occur inadvertently, or even with benevolent intentions, including within the context of this conference.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Concept**

Our goal is to ensure that every conference attendee is well-versed in our awareness concept. This initiative aims to diminish knowledge hierarchies and bring everyone to the same level of understanding. Additionally, we aim to uphold maximum transparency and create a space for feedback.

# **2 Fundamentals of Support Activities in the Conference Context**

## **2.1 Power of Definition**

Individuals affected by violence or discrimination determine for themselves the type of (sexualized) violence or discrimination they have encountered and select the terms that accurately depict their experiences.

Violence and abusive behavior can extend beyond sexualization to include excessive domination of space, racism, sexism, anti-queer discrimination, or other forms of discriminatory behavior.

Recognizing the power of definition signifies a shift away from relying solely on legal jurisdiction, which places the burden of proof on the affected individuals.

## **2.2 Victim-centeredness**

Awareness prioritizes the care of affected individuals. If desired, we can also offer education for those who exhibit violent behavior or take on a role that involves facilitating discussions.

## **2.3 Empowerment**

Through awareness support, we aim to restore the self-efficacy of affected individuals during their recovery process. The objective is to create an environment where everyone feels as free, safe, and comfortable as possible.

## **2.4 Accompanying the process and not solution-oriented**

Awareness involves accompanying and supporting those affected, providing space, and offering care. Our approach prioritizes addressing the needs of individuals in a personalized and situational manner.

Overall, we serve as conduits for addressing needs and as liaisons among all parties involved. Please feel free to approach us at any time for any assistance you may require!

# **3 Framework Conditions for Practical Support Work**

## **3.1 Structure and Composition of the Awareness Team**

Our team is made up of several people. To ensure transparency and enable attendees to find the right contact person, here is a positioning:

**Jo** (they/them or no pronouns) positions as white, able-bodied and non-binary-genderfluid. Jo is a member of the awareness team, a student and works freelance. They are also actively involved at awer e.V.

**Eve** (they/them and she/her) is a white trans\* (non-binary) person. They are neurodivergent and able-bodied, with a chronic illness. Eve holds a German passport and was socialized in an academic environment in West Germany. They have an academic degree and face financial challenges due to precarious self-employment.

**Anna** (she/her) is cis-gender, white and able-bodied. Anna is academically socialized, a student and part of awer e.V.

**Jana** (she/her) is cis-female, white and able-bodied. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree as a first-generation university student. Her everyday life is restricted by an illness.

**Lucie** (she/her) is cis-female, white and able-bodied. Lucie is a first-generation university student studying for a Master's degree while having a very low income. Her everyday life is limited by a chronic illness.

Daria (she/her) is a first-generation university student with a migration background shaped by experiences of classism. As a result, she holds values such as tolerance, solidarity, and justice. In addition, Daria is characterized by chronic illnesses, making inclusion an important issue for her.

Dinus (he/they/none) is trans, non-binary, neurodivergent, able-bodied, German-passing and binational. Dinus is pursuing a Master's degree and is a first-generation university student with a low income from self-employment. Dinus is managing physical limitations due to a chronic illness.

### **3.2 Language Skills**

Languages spoken/understood in the team:

- Fluent: German, English
- Basic knowledge or understanding: Spanish, Italian, Romanian

### **3.3 Safe Space**

In addition to the awareness room – where you will find us – a quiet break room is available for those in need of solitude. We are also planning to establish a space exclusively for BIPOC individuals.

### **3.4 Error and Learning Culture**

With our awareness work, we are striving for a gradual change of the way we work together, which should lead to respectful and non-hierarchical interactions within shared spaces and in society at large. This can only take place as an ongoing, continuous process.

Continuously addressing privileges, power imbalances, and embracing the perspectives and needs of marginalized groups are crucial for combating systemic discrimination.

In doing so, we want to learn from mistakes and we welcome constructive criticism and view it as an opportunity for growth.

## **4 Preparatory Measures and Action Steps**

### **4.1 Decisions and Preparatory Measures**

In addition to developing a general awareness concept, we are crafting tailored versions adapted for specific spaces. For instance, a condensed version will be available for risk and retreat areas, outlining how to find us and specific approaches for engaging with the awareness team.

### **4.2 Possible Steps for Interacting with those Affected**

Here are some potential steps to take when engaging with those affected. These steps are not exhaustive representations of awareness work and are consistently tailored to meet the individual needs of those involved.

- When affected individuals approach us, we listen to their primary needs.
- We assess whether we are the appropriate person for them to speak with.
- If the individual expresses a desire, we offer them the option to move to a quieter environment where they can speak without interruption.
- Our actions are guided by the principles of awareness work, which include adopting a victim-centered approach and responding to the individual's needs. We take necessary steps such as involving caregivers or reaching out to the organization team.
- Even after the immediate situation has concluded, we remain accessible to those affected and can provide additional support or connect them with further assistance if needed.

### **4.3 Security Concept**

The venue will provide security personnel on-site, and neither we nor the conference organizers have control over their selection or operations. Additionally, the organizers will have de-escalation officers or their own security staff available to assist with awareness and support for participants.

## **5 Education and Prevention**

### **5.1 Pre-Conference Preparation**

Our aim is to establish a sustainable and solidarity-based awareness practice at the conference. It's crucial that all attendees have access to the same information to prevent knowledge hierarchies and support the creation of a critical, reflective, and power-sensitive space. To achieve this, we provide comprehensive information about our work and the structure of anti-discrimination awareness efforts in advance.

We encourage all participants, including organizational members and workshop facilitators, to familiarize themselves with our concept and support it based on intrinsic motivation. By ensuring equal access to information and transparency, we collaboratively create a "Code of Conduct" to design the conference space as safely and inclusively as possible.

For this purpose, we send our awareness concept to all participants and attendees via email several weeks before the event, allowing sufficient time for review and familiarity. We welcome any questions and encourage participants to contribute to shaping the process.

We are open to constructive criticism of our concept and working methods, even if it comes through third parties or organizations for anonymity reasons. We can be reached via email at [awer\\_le@posteo.com](mailto:awer_le@posteo.com) and our Instagram channel [@awer\\_le](https://www.instagram.com/awer_le).

## **5.2 During the Conference**

In addition to offering direct support to those affected and making transgressive behavior visible, prevention is a key aspect of our awareness efforts. By providing information and education beforehand, we signal that discrimination and boundary violations are actively addressed and support structures are in place to mitigate such behaviors and assist those affected. This promotes more awareness for respectful interaction, which can reduce the occurrence of conflicts. We also demonstrate that there is no room for the deliberate use of violence and discrimination here. Instead, we take an active and partisan stance in support of the needs of those affected.

Participants can familiarize themselves with the concepts of awareness work during the conference and obtain more in-depth information on their own by providing easy access to information (through flyers, brochures, books, etc.) and offering opportunities to learn more about the topics of discrimination and power criticism through discussions with the awareness team.

To ensure transparency on-site, we will display a version of our awareness concept at representative locations within the venue, such as toilets and workshop rooms (please refer to the location map for details). These notices will indicate where participants can locate us. Additionally, alternative methods of communication with the awareness team will be provided, giving participants the opportunity to contact us through various channels, including anonymously. Anonymously reporting can be done either via the on-site feedback box or through a dedicated pad set up for this purpose ([https://pad.riseup.net/p/Briefkasten\\_Konferenz](https://pad.riseup.net/p/Briefkasten_Konferenz)).

Following the opening speech of the conference, our team will introduce ourselves to all participants. It's crucial that participants are familiar with us and our work, allowing them to feel connected to our team. If space permits, we will introduce ourselves in smaller groups, providing additional information about our role and responsibilities. It's important to emphasize that we are available as points of reference for participants throughout the conference, not only in emergencies but also for addressing any questions, concerns, or requests they may have.

## **6 Protection, Self-Care and Work Safety**

The group structure and self-care are fundamental aspects of our internal team dynamic. In order to cultivate an environment that is supportive and appreciative, we are implementing various measures to prioritize the individual needs of team members, ensuring sustainable awareness efforts.

For the sake of self-care and our own well-being, we reserve the right to cancel shifts and may not be able to provide support for certain awareness cases. We believe that care work is often undertaken in precarious conditions without proper compensation, and we are opposed to the normalization of unpaid or underpaid care work. It is imperative that care work be valued, which should be reflected in fair compensation for awareness-related tasks.

Shifts are typically staffed by a minimum of 2 and up to 4 team members to accommodate the varying experiences of discrimination and potential triggers among those seeking support. Additionally, all situations are handled by at least two team members to ensure mutual support and safety during shifts.

## **7 Limits of Awareness Work**

### **7.1 Responsibilities**

As members of the awareness team, we do not view ourselves as qualified or responsible for handling security-related incidents or engaging in physically intrusive or disruptive actions. We believe that these matters fall under the jurisdiction of the organization team and security personnel.

Additionally, we are not trained to handle medical or psychological emergencies. In such situations, it is essential to contact paramedics or arrange for aftercare services to ensure adequate and responsible assistance.

Throughout the conference, our role does not extend to conducting transformative work with individuals exhibiting discriminatory or violent behavior beyond providing

information or facilitating discussions and processes. Transformative interventions require sustained efforts over an extended period with appropriate frameworks in place.

Furthermore, we are unable to offer professional support to individuals experiencing physical or psychological distress due to drug use. Instead, we advocate for the involvement of trained psychiatric care staff in areas where there is potential risk, to provide individuals with the necessary support and safety.

## **8 Contact and Feedback**

### **8.1 Telephone Numbers, Location Map**

In a revised version of this document, you will discover a map detailing our locations during the conference, along with a telephone number for reaching us.

### **8.2 Further Services for Visitors**

You may reach out to us at any time with concerns regarding the awareness program provided by awer e.V. You can contact us via email at [awer\\_le@posteo.com](mailto:awer_le@posteo.com) or through our Instagram channel [@awer\\_le](#).

Furthermore, we can assist affected individuals by providing information and connecting them with follow-up care resources. Additionally, we offer comprehensive information materials on various awareness-related topics.