

Manifesto point 5: everyone who has a part in the reporting and complaints procedure, from confidentiality persons to members of the external complaints committee, will have appropriate training to ensure their actions do not perpetuate harmful rape myths. They are also aware of criminal legislation regarding rape and sexual violence. This is how we ensure the reporting and complaints procedure is trauma sensitive.

When reporting or submitting a complaint, the complainant is sometimes not treated trauma-sensitively, for example because the complainant is confronted with suggestive questions or rape myths. Higher education institutions have started introducing various training courses that can prevent people, from confidential advisers to members of the external complaints committee, from inadvertently perpetuating harmful norms around reporting sexual violence.

During the conference, the working groups on trauma-sensitivity were led by Legien Warsosemito-Schenk from Stichting Samen Helen. Legien is a trainer in trauma-sensitive conversation techniques and wrote a [toolkit](#) about how to support people who have experienced sexual violence.

Training such as the ones offered by Legien can give staff the tools to be confident in supporting students. Spreading the skills of trauma-sensitive conversation has the power to give people who decide to seek help adequate support and change how people think about seeking help in the first place. Today, on average, it takes a woman who experienced sexual violence 16 years to ask for help and for men, it can take even longer. People often feel guilty, ashamed, and afraid of not being believed.

Talking about sexual violence in a trauma-sensitive manner changes the culture and stigma around it, which can change these numbers and make sure people get the support they need and when they need it. University environments can play a crucial role in leading that change with staff and students who are able to support people who come forward making an impact in their communities and beyond.