



How to use the Sensoa Flag System in your organisation and country?

Tips & tricks on how to make effective cultural adaptations

SENSOA

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Colophon

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1. Introduction

What is the Sensoa Flag system?

The Sensoa Flag System is an aid for assessing sexual behaviour and preventing sexually transgressive behaviour. The method assists you in supporting healthy sexual development in (vulnerable) children, young people and adults. The Flag System also provides you with insight into sexuality, desires, boundaries, criteria and gradations of sexually transgressive behaviour. It breaks through taboos, making it easier to talk about these issues with colleagues, management, parents, carers, and with the persons involved themselves. The method has a sound scientific and educational foundation.

Aims of the Flag System

The Sensoa Flag System has various aims:

- To promote sexual health and sexual rights: [1] the rights of the child, as well as [2] universal human rights in general.
- To assess, to encourage discussion of and to combat sexually transgressive behaviour as well as the exploitation of children, young people and (vulnerable) adults, within various international frameworks [1, 2], such as the treaty of Lanzarote [3].

The Flag System always defines sexual behaviour or sexually transgressive behaviour on the basis of sexual integrity, in other words acting in accordance with your own values, beliefs, and morals in the context of sexual matters.

Basic insights of sexual development

Before you start using the Sensoa Flag System as a professional, some basic insights need to be acquired. As a professional, it is important to have knowledge of the behaviours, feelings and thoughts that occur in the sexual development of children and young people. Each stage of life (from baby to adult) is associated with specific behavioural traits and with sexually suggestive behaviour. After all, sexual development is a lifelong and incremental process. Basic knowledge of this is needed to get started with the Flag System. A good understanding of your target group's sexual development helps to better assess their sexual behaviour (is it okay or does it cross a line) and respond to it appropriately. More information on the sexual development can be found in various languages in the Standards for Sexuality Education. <https://www.bzga-whocc.de/en/publications/standards-for-sexuality-education/>

Adapting the Flag System to your context

When implementing the Flag System, it's important to use a top-down approach. At the same time, we are making the Flag System flexible so that it can also be applied bottom-up. You can adapt the method to specific cultural or organisational needs. This enables you to use the Flag System freely as a professional or an organisation, both within different sectors (such as care, education, social work and sport) and within various cultures.

What we mean by culture is a specific group of people (a community, ethnic group, professional organisation, nation) that can be claimed as having a culture. This means that the members share values, beliefs, expectations and norms, including traditions and customs, and that they share established social networks and behavioural norms that define them as a cultural group [4].

These Tips & tricks are here to help you whenever you wish to adapt the Flag System to your specific organisation or its culture.

What we mean by cultural adaptations is adapting the method to take account of language, culture and context of clients [4]. By adapting cultural references, you can make the method more relevant and increase the level of engagement. There are two key conditions for adapting the Flag System:

- The adaptations do not alter the essential components of the Flag System.
- Sexual rights, the rights of the child, and universal human rights will be respected.

It is normal to encounter challenges when introducing the Flag System. Everyone views sexual behaviour through their own cultural, religious, political, and legal lenses. It can take time and training to get used to the Flag System's perspective of sexual integrity, and it will certainly prompt many interesting discussions. This guide is there to help you with these challenges.

Sensoa Flag System: legal agreements

Are you using the Sensoa Flag System? Find out what legal aspects are involved.

Situations with drawings are not images of abuse

The Flag System uses situations with drawings of sexual acts between children, adolescents and sometimes adults.

Belgian criminal law does not classify these drawings as images of sexual abuse of minors ('child pornography'). Only visual representations of minors intended for sexual purposes are considered images of sexual abuse of minors and are punishable. Educational or didactic material is not covered, unless one takes it out of that context and puts it on a porn site, for example.

However, the law can vary from country to country. Therefore, check how it was determined in your country before distributing situation sketches with drawings in any way.

In doubt? Then only use the description of the situation and not the drawings.

Green flag for sexual acts: strict conditions

In addition, the Flag System generally gives a green flag to sexual acts between children and adolescents that can be considered an expression of the discovery of sexuality in the context of personal development.

Of course, this is only done on condition that the other criteria are also met (mutual consent, voluntary engagement, equality...) and that the developmental level of the young people involved is taken into account.

In Belgium, the behaviour of minors is not subject to criminal law but to juvenile law. Minors who commit criminal acts come before the juvenile court. To our knowledge, sexual behaviour among minors in the context of sexual development is not prosecuted in Belgium unless there is a complaint because one of the other criteria was violated: e.g. no consent, no voluntary engagement.

For sexual contacts with adults, minors under 16 cannot give consent in Belgium. One exception is that a young person as young as 14 can give consent if the age difference with the partner does not exceed three years. Again, the law and its application in practice may vary from country to country. If this is the case, and certain acts do turn out to be punishable in the context of a country, this should be taken into account in the response mode.

Disclaimer and terms of use

1. The Sensoa Flag System is offered as a tool to assess sexual (transgressive) behaviour. Sensoa hereby expressly disclaims any responsibility for actions, decisions or consequences arising from the practical use or implementation of the Sensoa Flag System.

2. According to the [Terms of Use](#), as a user, you expressly agree to indemnify Sensoa also against any third party claims arising from improper use of the elements of the Flag System. Moreover, these elements are not tailored to circumstances specific to an individual or entity. Accordingly, one cannot consider them as personal, professional or legal advice or its equivalent.

3. Finally, it is important, that you always follow the applicable professional agreements, protocols and procedures that apply in your context or country when having discussions with (potential) perpetrators and victims of (serious) transgressive behaviour. This may include informing the authorities if necessary.

The Ecological Validity Model

2. The Ecological Validity Model

This guide is based on the Ecological Validity Model (EVM): a well-known and commonly used framework for cultural adaptations. [5] The model takes account of the dimensions of the method itself as well as culturally sensitive elements.

Challenges may also arise when taking account culturally sensitive elements.

Firstly, it may be challenging to find the balance between cultural knowledge and stereotyping. Sometimes, you might not take account of someone's cultural background when it would actually be better to do this in order to understand one another better and to improve communication. This may happen, for example, because you have too little information about their cultural background. On the other hand, it is not always appropriate to automatically assume that cultural differences play a role. This can, in fact, lead to stereotyping and "othering". "Othering" is a process by which people are regarded as 'other' or different to you. It defines a person's or group's identity through the stigmatisation and distancing of others into an "us-them" distinction [6]. When people and groups are victims of "othering", stigma, discrimination, and prejudice arise.

Secondly, while cultural background is important, it can sometimes overshadow scientifically substantiated aspects of the method. If this happens, you potentially lose sight of the aims of the Flag System. The cultural adaptations are, in fact, intended to increase the credibility of the Flag System in the organisation, making the method more effective [4]. Hence, a clear balance between the process and the content should be observed, while the core components of the Flag System should remain unchanged.

Finally, cultural sensitivity is a continuous process: it evolves over time and with the context. Cultural adaptations implemented by one organisation this year may no longer be relevant in five years' time and will also not automatically work for another organisation, even though they are operating in the same context, country or city.

The EVM takes eight major culturally sensitive domains within a method into account (Table 1). These dimensions are not discrete and might even considerably overlap. The EVM addresses language, people, metaphors, content, concepts, goals, methodology, and context. We will now examine each dimension more closely.

Table 1: Culturally sensitive elements and the dimensions of the Flag System

Methods	Culturally sensitive elements
1. Language	Culturally appropriate; culturally syntonic language.
2. People	The role of cultural similarities and differences between two (or more) persons in shaping a relationship during the method.
3. Metaphors	Symbols and concepts shared by a population. Sayings used in the method.
4. Contents	Cultural knowledge: local values, customs and traditions; uniqueness of groups (social, economic, historical, political, legal).
5. Concepts	Concepts of the method consonant with culture and context: dependence versus interdependence versus independence; emic (within culture, specific) over etic (outside culture, universal).
6. Goals	Transmission of positive and adaptive cultural values; support for adaptive values from the culture of origin.
7. Methodology	Development and/ or cultural adaptation of the method.
8. Context	Social, economic, historical, political and legal context of the method.

2.1 Language

The first dimension comprises the language of the method. Knowledge of the language is often associated with cultural familiarity. Language is essential when you want to talk about feelings and experiences, which is why it is also a key component of the Flag System. Linguistic adaptations therefore involve far more than just literally translating the method and making it available in a particular language.

The Flag System was developed in Dutch and Flemish and later translated into English, with the Belgian and Dutch context in mind. An English translation is useful for many organisations. However, different elements in the translated version may still be difficult to understand, since the context in many countries is very different to that in Belgium and/or the Netherlands.

2.2 People

The dimension of people or persons refers to colleagues, management, parents, carers, children, and young people: in short, anyone who might use the Flag System. In this dimension, we look at the people themselves as well as the relationship between them. Culturally sensitive elements in this dimension might lie in the cultural similarities and differences between two (or more) persons. Cultural factors can also have effects on relationships between people.

As well as the persons who will use the Flag System, this dimension also refers to the characters that are portrayed in the Flag System itself. The Flag System is a collection of different situations described in short statements with accompanying drawings of different kinds of people. These drawings may not seem to correspond to the people in your organisation or culture: they might have a different bodily posture or clothing, the context may not be exactly transposable, and so on. You might think that you cannot use the Flag System in this situation. However, the Flag System is, in fact, there to initiate a conversation and thereby bring about change. A solution may be to only use the statements and situations that correspond to your country or organisation, and you could create drawings you have adapted yourself. Alternatively, you could choose not to use the drawings if they are too improper and just use the statements.

However, before creating new drawings that portray the situations more appropriately for your context, it is important to keep following criteria in mind:

- Make sure to provide enough diversity
 - in people (e.g. gender, age, physique, skin colour, hairstyle or clothing, ...);
 - in situations (e.g. school, healthcare, at home, outdoors, sports club or online/digital, ...).
- Keep it gender-sensitive. Situations with men should not get a different judgement than those in which women or non-binary persons occur. Make sure that the aggressor is not always male nor the victim always female.
- Use common situations. In other words, situations that do happen and that people are talking about.
- Keep the drawings simple. Only depict people or items that are necessary to comprehend the situation.
- Pay attention to body language. The body language that is shown in the illustrations should correspond to the emotions felt by the characters.

2.3 Metaphors

By metaphors, we mean symbols and concepts, but also sayings that might be used in the method. Metaphors are unique to different cultures and might not be understood by everyone. It is important to recognise the metaphors that are present in a method and to change them to a variant that is closer to the culture of the user.

Another symbol forming part of the Flag System's core components are the colours of the flags. They are conceptualised as a traffic light with green for 'this is okay', yellow/orange for 'watch out, try to alter your behaviour', red for 'stop, continuing is dangerous, you are not allowed to' and black would be like the fine you get if you did not stop for the red light and did not notice of the clear signal to stop.

2.4 Content

Content refers to the cultural knowledge. It is important to know how to deal with cultural information about local values, customs and traditions. This enables you to start working in a way that values cultural differences while still staying true to the methodology of the Flag System. The cultural uniqueness of a group must form part of the method in order to increase cultural acceptance and relevance. Remember, however, that universal human rights apply to all individuals, irrespective of local customs and traditions.

2.5 Concepts

The concepts or criteria used in the Flag System should be consonant with the target population's experience to make sure the terms used are relevant, acceptable, and understandable.

Are we understanding the same things across different cultures when we talk about mutual consent, voluntary engagement, equality, appropriate for the development, age and functioning level, appropriate for the context and impact? Are the definitions clearly described? Uncertainty about this might lead to different evaluations of sexual behaviour and incomprehension about the chosen flag.

2.6 Goals

The goals of the Flag System are 1) to be able to assess sexual behaviour, 2) to discuss or to communicate about this behaviour, and 3) to respond to the behaviour in an appropriate way. The Flag System can also ensure:

- better coordination within the organisation concerning the (educational) approach towards sexually transgressive behaviour.
- the development of a clearly defined vision and policy concerning sexual health within the organisation.

2.7 Methods

This dimension refers to the methods or procedures of the Flag System. Ideally, you incorporate cultural knowledge into the procedures, however, the core components of the Flag System must not be changed.

The core components are the six criteria (consent, voluntary engagement, equality, appropriate for the level of development and functioning, appropriate in the given context, and impact), the four assessment categories (the behaviour is okay, should be altered, clearly transgressive or seriously transgressive), the coloured flags (green, yellow, red and black) and the Developmental Chart.

2.8 Context

Context concerns the social, economic, historical, religious, political and legal reality of a culture or organisation. However, it also involves the unique needs and experiences of the different people who use the Flag System. It is crucial to acknowledge that the values upheld by the Flag System, beginning with sexual integrity, may be at odds with the current legal and/ or religious landscape of a particular country or organisation.

Laws and religious doctrines may evolve over time: they may not always reflect the practical reality. The basic principles of the Flag System are more constant and are based on various international frameworks relating to fundamental human rights. It may be difficult to adopt the values and the approach based on sexual integrity as used in the Flag System. People view sexual behaviour based on their own social, economic, cultural, religious, historical, political and/or legal beliefs. Becoming accustomed to the Flag System may require time and training.

This guide is therefore intended to assist users so they may reap the many benefits of the Flag System. We will examine this in more detail in the third chapter of this guide: 'How to start?'.

Table 2: Examples of possible cultural adaptations

	Example (before adaptations)	Issue	Suggested adaptation	Example (after adaptations)
Language	"Look at my willy swinging!"	"Willy" is being used to mean "penis" and is used mainly in the United Kingdom, but not elsewhere. Try using a different word here.	Use local slang.	"Look at my weenie swinging!"
	"A girl of 10 peeks into boys' cubicles."	"Cubicles" might not be the right word, as it can also mean "a partially enclosed office workspace that is separated from neighbouring workspaces by partitions", which without the additional drawing might lead to confusion.	Use a synonym.	"A girl of 10 peeps into the boys' changing rooms."
People	Female characters in the drawings.	In Iran, women are required to cover their head by law. Some of the current drawings might therefore be problematic if one would want to use the Flag System in an Iranian school.	Apply a hijab on female figures in new drawings where appropriate.	More female figures with a hijab in the new drawings.
	Most characters in the drawings are Caucasian.	The figures in the drawings look too Caucasian compared with your particular target group. This might lead to a feeling of disconnection with the situations that are portrayed in it. Sadly, there is not enough budget to create new drawings just yet.	Draw figures that match the appearance of people in your country. OR Leave out the drawings.	New drawings to accompany the statements and situations.
Metaphors	The colour of the flags: "Black would be like the fine you get if you did not stop for the red light and did not take notice of the clear signal to stop."	The organisation feels uncomfortable about the colour black for the "worst situation".	Change the black flag to another dark colour.	The colour of the flags: green, yellow, red and dark purple.
Content	"An employee and a male client have an intimate relationship and are exchanging nude photos with each other."	The organisation that wants to use the Flag System is a hospital. They want the situation to reflect their context more closely.	Change the profile of the person in the situation.	"A care provider and a male patient have an intimate relationship and are exchanging nude photos with each other."
	"A girl of 10 peeks into boys' cubicles."	Girls never go swimming together with boys in this school/country.	Change the boys' cubicles to girls' cubicles.	"A 10-year-old girl peeps into the other girls' cubicles."
Concepts	Definition of the criterion "Context".	The last sentence stating "Cultural differences may also play a part in this" might lead to certain situations being assessed as a black flag instead of a green flag due to a certain law or rule.	Add additional explanation and nuance to the definition to avoid this problem.	"Cultural differences may also play a part in this. However, keep in mind how the Flag System views sexual integrity and its principles which are rooted in various international frameworks centred on basic human rights."

Goals	"To be able to respond to sexual behaviour in an appropriate way."	The organisation is not ready to completely implement the Flag System just yet. There might be a lot of debate concerning the situation cards as not all parties use the perspective of sexual integrity, but rather their own social, economic, cultural, religious, historical political, and/or legal perspective.	Leave out the third goal for now and focus on the first two. Do not discount the whole Flag System, but instead use this as an opportunity to focus on the second goal "discussing sexual behaviour" to start a debate. "Why are we looking at this situation differently?" It is ok to disagree with each other. The debate you're starting can fuel new insights and ways of looking at situations.	/
Methodology	The situation cards.	The organisation is not ready to completely implement the Flag System just yet. There might be a lot of debate concerning the situation cards as not all parties use the perspective of sexual integrity, but rather their own social, economic, cultural, religious, historical political, and/or legal perspective.	Leave out the situation cards for now and focus on the use of the six criteria. Do not discount the whole Flag System, but instead use this as an opportunity to focus on the second goal "discussing sexual behaviour" to start a debate. "Why are we looking at this situation differently?" It is ok to disagree with each other. The debate you're starting can fuel new insights and ways of looking at situations.	/
Context	"Two adult lesbian women, who share their relationship status and photos on social media, are the subject of some negative comments at work." → Green flag, despite the potentially negative impact of negative and hurtful comments.	In a country where non-heterosexual relationships are forbidden by law, such situations will lead to a much greater impact than simply "some negative comments". The sexual disposition of the women may depend on the understanding and even the approval of the team leader, care provider or other professional at work (using the Flag System in this specific situation). It then remains important to warn the women against the significant effects of such actions and potential abuse that follows if other people see them on social media, and to discuss how this can be prevented.	Leave out the coloured flags and focus on the discussion itself.	Instead of marking the situation with a certain colour, focus on the discussion with the women. What is okay in their behaviour, which risks (due to certain laws) should be kept in mind, what solutions can be found together with the women, etc.?

How to get started?

3. How to get started [7,8]

When you want to implement a new tool which will lead to a change within an organisation, a specific group of people or a community, it implies you are willing to make changes compared with how things were done before. Challenges are to be expected, and even more so if the method includes sensitive topics, such as sexual or sexually transgressive behaviour. An effective method therefore needs an implementation strategy that will embed the Flag System into the new habits of your target group and lead to the desired goals.

There are four stages to run through in order to reach a full implementation of the Flag System: 1) There is absolutely no intention of using the Flag System yet, 2) There is the intention to use the Flag System and a first introduction to the Flag System has taken place, 3) The first step to implement the Flag System has been taken, and 4) The Flag System is being used in its entirety.

3.1 There is no intention of taking action yet

At this point, there are no plans to take action yet. There is no need for or there are difficulties with 1) the assessment of sexual behaviour, 2) the discussion or communication about this behaviour and/or 3) the appropriate educational response to give to the behaviour in your organisation or community. As you found your way to the Flag System we want to congratulate you on successfully passing this first stage.

However, other persons in your organisation or community might still be in this first stage and are likely to reject the Flag System tool if it is simply forced upon them. It is therefore important to acknowledge a person's initial opinions on the Flag System and address any reasons why they don't want to implement it. Encourage everyone to collaborate and give feedback to pass this stage.

Here are some steps that might help you move from "no intention yet" to "an intention" to implement the Flag System:

1. **Start by establishing trust** before bringing up the subject of change, this being the Flag System. Create a secure and encouraging environment where everyone feels at ease speaking about topics such as sexuality, desires, boundaries, criteria and gradations of sexual behaviour. The more everyone gets increasingly involved in the topics, the sooner defensiveness and reluctance to use the Flag System will decrease.
2. **Invite everyone to explain their understanding of the problem** or their experiences with any difficulties in 1) the assessment of sexual behaviour, 2) the discussion or communication about this behaviour and/or 3) the appropriate response to give to the behaviour. This will show your interest in their perspective, but this might also raise some awareness concerning the problem.
3. **Discuss benefits and drawbacks** of the Flag System and its implementation in your organisation or community. People in this first stage are most likely to oppose a change proposal mainly because the benefits of the change may not be significant enough. When the benefits of using the Flag System increase and surpass the eventual drawbacks, people will automatically advance to the next stages of the implementation process. Emphasise the many benefits of the Flag System, including correctly assessing sexual behaviour, supporting healthy sexual development, making taboo subjects easier to discuss, preventing sexually transgressive behaviour, promoting sexual health and rights, and more.
4. **Agree on a direction.** To help people who are not yet fully persuaded to implement the Flag System, plan your implementation strategies carefully and work with them to find an acceptable pathway. Some people will agree to go for the full implementation of the Flag System, swiftly moving on to its full implementation, while others will want to go slower and start with an introduction to the Flag System and keep it at that for some time.

3.2 There are intentions to take action and a first introduction to the Flag System has taken place

In this second stage, your organisation or community understands the problem or difficulties that are faced in 1) the assessment of sexual behaviour, 2) the discussion or communication about this behaviour and/ or 3) the appropriate response to give to the behaviour in your organisation or community.

To have a better grasp of the Flag System, we advise becoming more familiar with some of its core components, these being the six criteria. Try to implement and use the six criteria to assess and discuss future cases of unclear sexual behaviour in your environment. No need to use the flags just yet.

Dealing with ambivalence

To assist people, organisations or communities through the full implementation process, you must be able to deal with ambivalence. Ambivalence often arises during a process of transition like this one. Change often provokes feelings of ambivalence, and this is normal.

Here are two ways to eliminate ambivalence during this second stage:

1. **Make ambivalence acceptable.** People often feel tense and uncertain whenever you ask them to change something. This tension can build as you approach the decision to make the change. Tension and uncertainty can also be extended to whole organisations. Especially in the case of the Flag System, tackling topics related to sexual behaviour, it is not surprising that these uncertainties might be impactful. **Reassure the people in your organisation or community that having conflicting feelings, uncertainties, and reservations is normal.** Explain that it is usual for people to feel ambivalent about this issue, even if they think that they have addressed these emotions and are about to make a choice.
2. **Discuss** participants' wishes, options, reasons, and needs to change. Ask open-ended questions, such as, "How would you like things to be implemented so you feel comfortable using the Flag System?". **Keep in mind that the objective is to assist people in your organisation or community in developing their own arguments to use the Flag System.** The goal is to fix issues concerning ambivalence and to avoid speaking in terms of change (including questions about commitment, activation and taking steps) too rapidly or formulate any plan of action. This can wait till the next stage of change.

Help to tip the decision-making balance towards change

Most individuals automatically consider the advantages and disadvantages of a possible change before making a choice. This process is called "decisional balancing". The current method for dealing with sexual behaviour is being evaluated: the "good" aspects of this are reasons for not changing. These are weighed up against the "less good" aspects, which are reasons for using the Flag System. When the advantages of using the Flag System outweigh the disadvantages, use of the Flag System becomes more desirable. You can help people in your organisation or community to become more aware of and consider the advantages of the Flag System in order to tilt the scales in the favour of your plan to roll out the method.

Here are some steps that will help you tip the balance:

1. **Assess where your organisation or community's position is in terms of "decisional balancing" at this moment.** Is everyone eager to start implementing the Flag System, or are there people still hesitant about it? Who has already been using the six criteria of the Flag System and how did this go?
2. **Explore the pros and cons of the Flag System.** As a core aspect of "decisional balancing", it is important to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the Flag System. To do this, ask the members of your organisation or community to compile a list of the advantages and disadvantages of the Flag System. They can do this together in a brainstorming session or independently. The lists can provide prompts for the discussion during a subsequent meeting within the organisation or community. Putting the information down on paper might help organise the conversation.
3. **Explore values in relation to the Flag System.** Return the discussion to the aims and values of the Flag System. The Flag System is above all a tool that is intended to promote communication and discussion about sexual behaviour in such a way that everyone feels heard. Try to link these goals and values to the values of your organisation or community.
4. **Explore your organisation's or community's understanding and expectations of the Flag System.** In working towards a decision, it is important to understand what everyone understands by "change" and what their expectations of the Flag System are. Some people might believe that implementing the Flag System means changing an entire way of working. Some others might believe they have to implement the Flag System overnight. This may be overwhelming. By exploring these meanings and expectations with the people in your organisation or community, you will get a sense of which actions they would consider and which they would not. Some might feel uncomfortable with certain situation cards and be unwilling to use them, while others might feel like they need more time to get to know the Flag System better. It will help you spot the challenges, which in turn will allow you to search for solutions.
5. **Assess everyone's Knowledge, Attitude and Self-Efficacy (KAS)** concerning sexually transgressive behaviour. [A KAS-questionnaire has been created to help you with this.](#) Discuss the results of the "Knowledge", "Attitude" and "Self-Efficacy" scales, as well as the corresponding feedback. Which items received low scores? What is the general knowledge and attitude concerning sexual behaviour? Which parts of the Flag System and its goals were perceived as more difficult? By looking at self-efficacy statements from people in your organisation in more detail, you can also discover what they feel they can and cannot do. Self-efficacy is the belief that you can act in a certain way or perform a particular task. Help people in your organization or community improve their self-efficacy.

6. **Enhance commitment to change by taking small steps.** Introduce your organization or community to the six criteria of the Flag System. Agree to assess every future case of sexual behaviour by going over the six criteria and discuss this assessment in groups. No need to work with the situation cards and flags just yet.

3.3 There are intentions to take action and steps are being taken to implement the Flag System

In this stage, your organisation or community is ready to take action, but still needs some preparation concerning the cultural adaptations. The different stages needed before implementing the Flag System into your organisation or community are listed below.

Stage 1: Determining the setting and consulting experts

Community engagement is important for cultural adaptation. This is why you should involve the right people in the different stages of cultural adaptation. Set up a steering group to collaborate with the stakeholders and implement the Flag System in your organisation.

Consult experts to understand the context your organisation is in, with a focus on sexually transgressive behaviour. Start by assembling situations (of sexual transgressive behaviour) that happened in the past and the experience that was linked to it. Such cases and examples of situations can be helpful to run through the Ecological Validity Model (EVM). Go through the eight dimensions of the EVM together with these experts to detect the cultural adaptations that need to be made. Do not hesitate to reproduce Table 2 with the specific adaptations for your organisation. You will find a blank version (Table 3) on the final page of this guide.

Stage 2: Preliminary adaptation of content of materials

The Flag System's original version was written in Dutch/ Flemish and was later translated into English. Do not hesitate to translate the Flag System into another language. You should also always back-translate it as an additional necessary quality control. This allows you to know how accurate the translation is.

Assess the translation using the expert feedback from Stage 1. Decide which cultural adaptations should be made in the text or in the provided illustrations. Include these in Table 3. Check with the criteria to determine if adaptations can or cannot be made.

Stage 3: Interactive adaptation of content with members of the community

Use and circulate the translated and adapted Flag System among members of the target group. It is recommended to work with focus groups to evaluate the translated and adapted Flag System. Be open to additional cultural adaptations. The text and illustrations might need a second round of adjustments. Make sure to include all the changes in Table 3.

Stage 4: Finalised adaptation

Step 5: Continuous evaluation and additional adaptations

Start using your culturally adapted Flag System but remain open to feedback.

3.4 The Flag System is being used in its entirety

Well done! The Flag System has been used in your organisation for a minimum of six months. After the four stages in the previous phase, there remains one final stage for a successful and sustainable implementation of the Flag System.

As mentioned earlier, not only the Flag System itself, but also cultural sensitivities, are ever changing constructs that continue to evolve in relation to time and context. Remain critical and reflect on the use of the Flag System.

1. **Assess the Knowledge, Attitudes and Self-Efficacy** of the people in your organisation or community by using the KAS-questionnaire. Remember, these were already studied in the previous stages. It is now time to see if the Knowledge, Attitudes and Self-efficacy concerning sexually transgressive behaviour and the Flag System have increased since then. Discuss the results of the three aspects, as well as the corresponding feedback.
2. **Check back at flagssystem.org and look out for new tools and information.** Is there any new information available that might be useful for your organisation or community?
3. **Re-evaluate the cultural adaptations that were made.** Are they still relevant for the current situation of your organization or community? Are there any changes needed? Never hesitate to return to Stage 1 and restart the process if needed.

4. References

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Table 3: Cultural adaptations for your organization

	Example (before adaptations)	Issue	Suggested adaptation	Example (after adaptations)
Language				
People				
Metaphors				
Content				
Concepts				
Goals				
Methods				
Context				