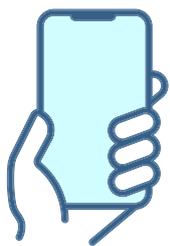
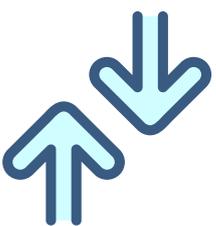




European Institute for  
Gender Equality

## ***Words Matter***

Supporting Gender Equality through Language  
and Communication



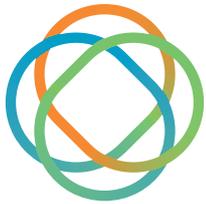


European Institute for  
Gender Equality

# ***Words Matter***

Supporting gender equality through language and  
communication





European Institute for  
Gender Equality

We are an independent centre and the primary source for information on gender equality in the European Union. We contribute to making the European Union become a Union of Equality, where women and men, girls and boys in all their diversity are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our societies.

EIGE's unique expert knowledge, research, data and tools help policymakers design measures that are inclusive and transformative and that promote gender equality in all areas of life. We communicate our expertise effectively and work closely with partners in order to raise awareness at the EU and national levels, as well as in EU candidate countries and potential candidate countries.

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# Introduction

Language and communication play a pivotal role in shaping our attitudes and behaviours and norms in society. They hold significant potential for not only supporting but also promoting gender equality.

This guide is designed to offer a broad and practical approach to using language and communication effectively to support gender equality.

Language and communication constantly evolve as we continually strive to strengthen and uphold gender equality. This guide therefore reflects a context-specific moment in time.

In this guide, we focus primarily on a gender-inclusive approach to language and communication. The aim is to strengthen the focus on both gender and intersecting inequalities such as age, ethnicity, migrant background, disability and sexual orientation.

Gender-inclusive language means ‘speaking and writing in a way that does not exclude or discriminate against a particular sex, gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate sexism or gender stereotypes’ <sup>(1)</sup>.

This guide has been developed from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) *Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Communication* published in 2019. Our 2019 toolkit focused on gender-sensitive language, defined as follows: ‘gender equality made manifest through language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men – and those who do not conform to the binary gender system – are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity, and respect.’

This guide takes the next step and adopts a gender-inclusive approach to align the guidance with current standards and practices of European and global public institutions (more in ‘Other guides’). It also aims to highlight the importance of considering a gender and intersectional perspective in the use of language. This helps to shed light on the interaction between gender and characteristics such as age, ethnicity, migrant background, disability and sexual orientation and gives visibility to different groups of women and men in diverse life situations.

We acknowledge that there are many different approaches to language in the gender equality space. We provide a list of approaches in the glossary at the end.

## **Language disclaimer**

*This guide is presented and intended for use in **English** only. Other EU languages may differ in their approaches due to linguistic nuances; therefore, this guide should be adapted and reworked according to your specific situation.*

<sup>(1)</sup> Council of Europe, *Guidelines for the use of language as a driver of inclusivity*, Strasbourg, 2024 (<https://rm.coe.int/guidelines-for-the-use-of-language-as-a-driver-of-inclusivity/1680aec235>).

## What is in the guide?

In this practical guide, we primarily focus on how to maintain a gender-inclusive approach to language and communication. We also share examples of other approaches to language that could be considered, depending on the situation and context.

Each section of this guide contains questions and practices to provoke thought and consideration. These include exercises for self-reflection to understand where biases exist, a plan for building inclusive messaging and guiding principles for developing communication formats, such as visual storytelling, social media, videos, voice-overs and events.

## Who can use it?

This guide is intended for wide use, whether you are a parliamentary assistant drafting texts, work in a corporation or civil society organisation or are a communications specialist. For actionable tips and tools to guide you towards more gender-inclusive language and communication choices, this guide will serve as a good starting point.

## Other guides

This guide is not a definitive resource. It can be used alongside others that are targeted at different audiences working in other areas. Notable examples include the following.

- The [Council of Europe's Guidelines for the use of language as a driver of inclusivity](#) is aimed at supporting Council of Europe staff in communicating in a gender-inclusive way in the two official languages of the organisation: English and French.
- The [UN's 'Gender-inclusive language'](#) guidelines and toolbox provide recommendations to help UN staff to use gender-inclusive language in any type of communication – oral or written, formal or informal, or for an internal or external audience.
- [Oxfam's Inclusive Language Guide](#) focuses on ending intersecting forms of inequality through written communication. It provides advice on the language preferred by marginalised people, groups and communities.

### **Broader context: key developments**

Developments in the EU's legal and policy approaches to gender equality have been significant. From the principle of equal pay between women and men in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 to the adoption of the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence in 2024 <sup>(2)</sup>, these historic milestones have helped pave a path towards a more gender-equal Europe.

For the context and purpose of this guide, we highlight the shift in language and concepts under EU law. From emphasising equality between the 'sexes' to recognising and integrating 'gender' and 'gender equality' over time, this has meant that gender issues are addressed at the EU level. These issues include gender roles and expectations, sexism, care responsibilities and gender-based violence.

Second, there is a growing tide of anti-gender narratives, which threatens to undo the gains made in terms of gender equality. The very word 'gender' is purposefully misinterpreted by said movements to gather support for restrictive traditional gender roles, furthering the inequalities outlined above. Therefore, it is especially important that we continue strengthening our efforts to make better communication choices to protect hard-won gains in advancing gender equality.

Third, rapid developments in communication have been brought on by digitalisation with the development of new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI). While, on the one hand, AI can make our lives easier and more efficient, it can also mirror ongoing systemic issues such as gender stereotyping, gender bias and gender-based violence.

Virtual assistants such as Alexa and Siri tend to have female voices and characteristics, such as being helpful and pleasant, and perform secretarial tasks that are traditionally assigned to women. This perpetuates unconscious assumptions that we have about gender roles in society, which influences discriminatory behaviours.

Similarly, the even more sinister side of digitalisation can result in persisting inequalities. Cyber violence against women and girls is a growing phenomenon. From cyberstalking to cyberbullying, ICT tools provide the grounds for a continuum of gender-based violence from the offline to the online world. This can include offensive and demeaning comments. This undermines the perceptions of women and therefore goes against the principles and values of equal treatment while also violating human rights.

<sup>(2)</sup> Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence (OJ L 2024/1385, 24.5.2024).

Furthermore, within AI technology, there are tools that are used to create synthetic media, such as deepfakes. One example is non-consensual images, whereby an individual's head or other body parts are incorporated into a pornographic image without consent, making it look like an individual is engaged in pornographic activity.

Such developments in communication can normalise damaging ideas about women and men in all their diversity.

Therefore, we should be mindful of these novel ways (now and in the future) that seek to dismantle progress. We need to strengthen our collective efforts to promote gender equality through our use of gender-inclusive language and communication.

## Getting started

Before jumping into the practical aspects of this guide, it is first important to acknowledge your gender biases and gender stereotypes, because we all have them.

The way that we think about others – our beliefs and attitudes – can influence how we treat each other – our behaviours – and can either perpetuate gender inequalities or support gender equality.

Understanding your gender biases and gender stereotypes is the starting point for adjusting and improving your language and communication.

**Gender biases** are prejudiced thoughts or actions based on the gender-based perception that women are not equal to men in rights and dignity.

**Gender stereotyping** refers to preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender.

### The surgeon dilemma

You have probably come across this classic riddle many times. The reason we have included it is because it stands the test of time for revealing ingrained gender biases and gender stereotypes.

*A man and his son are in a car accident. Unfortunately, the man passes away. His son is rushed to the hospital and urgently needs surgery. Upon arriving in theatre, the surgeon refuses to operate saying, 'I can't, it's my son!'*

Even if you already know the answer, think back to when you first heard the riddle. Were you confused by the outcome? Did you come up with multiple and perhaps complex theories to try and explain the outcome?

This riddle has perplexed many – 'how can the father perform the surgery when he died in the car accident?' – because the image of a surgeon that many hold in their minds is a man, not a woman. Our inherent gender bias encourages this binary view.

Consider your reaction if the riddle was slightly reworded – going from gendered to gender-neutral language – from 'son' to 'child'. Would your bias have been reduced?

Here is a short self-reflection exercise for you to explore potential gender biases and gender stereotypes.

- If we ask you to picture a nurse, what gender comes to mind?

- In school, a child is sick. Do you think the teacher is more likely to call their father or mother?
- A manager is strong, competent and charismatic. Which gender comes to mind?
- Think about your childhood: were you expected to behave a certain way because of your gender? What were some of those behavioural traits?
- What comes to mind when you see a working father doing his daughter's hair in the morning?
- If you were asked to address someone with non-binary pronouns (they/them) how would you react?
- When you think of rugby, which of these two images below do you naturally associate with the sport, considering they are both winning teams?



Source: Getty Images.

- Where has your reaction come from?
- What were you taught about rugby?
- What were you taught about women and sport?

The fact of the matter is that both teams are champions. However, normalised notions about women and men may prevent us from accepting that women can be rugby champions just as much as men. This may be down to how we were taught about different roles and expectations between girls and boys.

To further explore gender stereotypes, the [European Commission's 'End gender stereotypes'](#) campaign raises awareness of the role they play in our society. Through a series of visuals presenting different areas of life such as career choices and work–life balance, the messages encourage the viewer to rethink their perspectives.

For a more practical exercise, you can try the [Harvard Implicit Association Test](#). It will assess the areas in which you unconsciously associate certain attributes with specific groups of people.

## Different approaches to language

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to language. Depending on your specific situation and context, you can choose an approach and adapt it. You will have probably come across a number of terms such as gender-sensitive language, gender-transformative language and gender-responsive language. Definitions of these language approaches can be found in our glossary at the end of this guide.

As outlined in the introduction, this guide takes a gender-inclusive approach to language that is based on 'not excluding or discriminating against a particular sex, gender or gender identity, and not perpetuating sexism or gender stereotypes' <sup>(3)</sup>.

The following are three aspects to keep in mind when adopting a gender-inclusive approach to language:

1. recognise and challenge gender stereotypes;
2. maintain inclusivity by ensuring the visibility of women and men and girls and boys in all their diverse situations;
3. uphold the values of dignity, respect and equal treatment.

In adopting a gender-inclusive approach to language, you are taking an **intersectional** perspective. In other words, you are acknowledging the fact that we carry multiple identities.

Gender is a core aspect of our identity. However, other aspects of our identity interact with gender to make us who we are, such as age, ethnicity, having a migrant background, disability and sexual orientation, which can lead to intersecting inequalities. For example, a woman with a disability or a gay man may face additional barriers and discrimination compared with an able-bodied woman or a straight man.

Looking deeper into inequalities when it comes to the phenomenon of energy poverty, evidence underscores that, among women, older women – particularly those who have a migrant background – are disproportionately affected. When several inequalities interact with each other, it leads to greater gender inequality overall.

Using gender-inclusive language and communication approaches can be a subtle way to give visibility to gender and intersecting inequalities. It can also lead to changes in attitude and behaviours, resulting in more gender equality.

<sup>(3)</sup> Council of Europe, *Guidelines for the use of language as a driver of inclusivity*, Strasbourg, 2024 (<https://rm.coe.int/guidelines-for-the-use-of-language-as-a-driver-of-inclusivity/1680aec235>).

## Language inclusivity scale

For practical guidance, you can refer to a language inclusivity scale to understand what language should be outright avoided, considered and adopted to support greater gender equality.

### Definition of key terms

**Sexist language:** when someone intentionally uses derogatory and discriminatory language against a particular gender.

**Gender-biased language:** such language either implicitly or explicitly favours one gender over another and is a form of gender discrimination.

**Gender-neutral language:** such language is not gender-specific and considers people in general with no reference to women or men.

**Gender-inclusive language:** an approach that places both women and men at the same level and that does not convey gender stereotypes.

### Avoid sexist and gender-biased language

*Men are naturally better at sports than women because they are bigger and stronger.*

*I need to speak to the secretary; is she in the office?*

### Consider gender-neutral language

*People do not fully appreciate the impact they have on the environment.*

*The production of synthetic fabrics can require fewer human resources than natural fabrics.*

### Adopt gender-inclusive language

*In 2024, 23 % of women and 5 % of men aged 18–65 stated that they had experienced sexual violence in the previous year.*

*Lithuania's men are playing well today and are likely to win the match. Lithuania's women will also be playing tomorrow.*

**Table 1:** Examples of gender-biased language and gender-neutral language

Gender-biased language	Gender neutral language
Man in the street	Average person
Every man for himself	Everyone for themselves
Mankind	Humankind
To a man	Every person
Under the law, all men are equal	Under the law, all people are equal
Each applicant should submit his résumé by tomorrow	Each applicant should submit their résumé by tomorrow
Policeman or policewoman	Police officer
Businessman or businesswoman	Business executive
Repairman	Repairer, technician
Statesman	Politician, diplomat
Steward or stewardess	Flight attendant
Welcome ladies and gentlemen	Welcome everyone
Dear sir, madam	To whom it may concern

## Transforming a text from gender-biased to gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language

### Sexist and gender-biased

*Ambassadors and their wives are invited to attend an after-dinner reception.*

### Gender-neutral

*Guests are invited to attend an after-dinner reception.*

### Gender-inclusive

*Ambassadors and their spouses are invited to attend an after-dinner reception.*

## Transforming a vacancy notice from gender-biased to gender-inclusive language

### Original text

*The Chocolate Foundation Board is looking for a new chairman to take the lead and provide the strategic vision to move our organisation forward. He will be expected to participate actively in defining the organisational priorities of the coming year, drawing from his extensive business insights and quickly mastering all the necessary details of the foundation's functioning.*

### Application procedure

Each candidate must submit his application by Monday 12 December at 12:00. For more information, see the full application pack.

### Revised text

The Chocolate Foundation Board is looking for a new **chair** to take the lead and provide the strategic vision to move our organisation forward. **He/she/they** will be expected to participate actively in defining the organisational priorities of the coming year, drawing from **his/her/their** extensive business insights and quickly mastering all the necessary details of the foundation's functioning.

Diversity and gender balance are important to us as an organisation. Everyone meeting the assessment criteria in the application pack is encouraged to apply for this position.

Candidates who are currently under-represented are particularly welcome.

### Application procedure

Each candidate must submit **their** application by Monday 12 December at 12:00. For more information, see the full application pack.

The changes:

- removing the gendered stereotype of male leadership;
- including pronouns: he/she/they for greater visibility;
- placing emphasis on diversity and inclusion.

## Communication messages

Our choice of words within a specific language approach is only one aspect of how we can shape our societies to be gender-equal and more inclusive.

Communication is inextricably linked to language.

The relationship between words feeds into wider communication – that is, the messages and ideas we transmit to the world. This has a direct impact on our attitudes and behaviours towards each other. Thus, we can either overcome or reinforce gender inequalities.

In this section, we present a three-step plan to help you build up an effective communication message(s) within the framework of a gender-inclusive approach. You can use it for campaign development, policy writing, news writing or anything else related.

While this part of the guide may resonate mostly with communications experts, anyone can take the approaches explored here and adapt them to their communication within their scope of work.

### Scope and purpose

The starting point for any communication message is defining the scope and purpose – or, in other words, why are we talking about this and who is it for?

- Why do you want to communicate your message? What is the objective of the message that you want to communicate?
- How does it support gender equality and uphold the values of dignity, integrity and equal treatment?
- What is the desired outcome of communicating this message?

Within the scope and purpose of your communication message, assess whether it maintains a gender-inclusive approach. Does it consider multiple perspectives and shed light on gender inequalities? We recommend you also consult the [Fundamental Rights Agency's 10 Keys to Effectively Communicating Human Rights](#) for developing communication messages. It can be used together with our guide.

## Target audience

Knowing your target audience helps to shape your message and ground it in relevance for said audience.

The EU is home to diverse communities. We should aim to promote gender equality and uphold equal treatment of and respect for everyone. It will help to dismantle gender stereotypes in the pursuit of embracing greater inclusivity.

In respect of your target audience, consider the following.

- What is the impact you want this target audience to have?
- What needs are you trying to address?
- How do these needs differ for diverse groups of women and men? This includes people in marginalised situations where their experiences and needs are not adequately addressed.
- What attitudes and behaviours are you trying to change?
- Does the message for your target audience empower and give them a voice?
- How will your communication message trigger action?

## Message testing

Before you officially launch your communication message, we encourage you to integrate a message-testing stage to ensure alignment between the scope, purpose and target audience.

- Does the message resonate with the target audience?
- What works well and what could be improved?
- Are there lived experiences of diverse groups of women and men that you can integrate through ethical storytelling?
- Can your target audience play an active role in multiplying the message?
- Think about how the message can evolve over different life cycles by monitoring performance analytics from your chosen platform(s).

## Communication formats

Communication formats refer to the types of ways that we communicate our messages – in other words, how we bring them to life. This can range from more traditional written publications to content creation on social media to panel discussions at events. The choice of format can really matter for reaching your target audiences.

For example, today's social media landscape is dominated by younger demographics on platforms such as Instagram. Therefore, your communication message may yield more impact on social media than via other formats. However, we recommend that your communication message is shaped to suit a variety of formats to achieve maximum results

In this section, we provide guiding questions for you to consider for maintaining a gender-inclusive approach in your chosen communication format(s).

### For written publications

Written publications cover anything from reports to fact sheets, policy briefs and news articles. To strive for a gender-inclusive approach, we recommend that authors with a wide variety of backgrounds contribute to the publication to ensure that perspectives are balanced and broad. Consider the following guiding questions when developing a written publication.

- Does the topic highlight a trend or issue in which gender inequalities are adequately addressed?
- If there are multiple authors, do they represent diverse backgrounds for broader perspectives?
- Does the language support gender equality and the visibility of women and men in all their diversity?
- Is the language free of gender bias and gender stereotypes?

Further reading: check out [EIGE's 'COP28 and beyond: Five tips for gender-inclusive climate reporting'](#).

### For images

When using images to communicate a message, it is important to avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes that have long been presented in images. This is especially important when using images that have a strong gendered history, such as depicting doctors and nurses.

In any given visualisation of a key message, we recommend showing women and men in all their diversity engaging in a variety of different roles. This helps to reverse traditional gender norms and expectations.

Similarly, if it makes sense for your specific context and area, feature people who live with disabilities in roles other than being dependent or a patient.

Other factors to consider include colour schemes (avoiding gendered colours, namely pink for women and blue for men) and showing a range of ages, backgrounds, races and ethnicities to reflect the fullness of society.

How can I choose more gender-inclusive visuals? When considering any media, consider representation. This means depicting women and men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, body shapes and other potential facets of their identities.

Going deeper into representation, consider the nuances and the finer details.

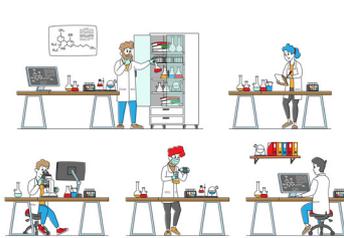
- What is their body position?
- What activity are they engaging in and how does it fit into broader inequalities, such as gender bias and gender stereotypes?
- Are men in 'dominating' roles, such as leading a meeting?
- Are women in 'supporting' roles, such as passive participants in a meeting?
- Are the roles depicted equally attributable to women and men?

Activities represented in visuals can carry gender biases. Women are more likely to be seen doing housework, cooking and in care or supporting roles. Men are more often seen in business or leadership scenarios. There are opportunities to better represent everyone in our choice of visuals, for example showing more men as great parents and more women as leaders. The use of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (or questioning) (LGBTQ+)-inclusive images, such as images of same-sex couples and families, and gender diversity can help challenge biases, assumptions and gender stereotypes.

Consider your palette, style and creative direction. This can help reduce gender stereotyping. We often associate pink colour schemes with childcare, women and heightened emotions – which are often and discriminatorily attached to women. Stereotypically, blue is often attributed to men. It is used for topics related to innovation, strength and science. Some sectors or topics can be feminised or masculinised. For example, nature-related issues are seen as feminine. Politics and defence are often seen as masculine. Therefore, try to stop and think about your choices and ask yourself 'Am I perpetuating gender stereotypes?' or 'Am I supporting gender equality by communicating more inclusive ideas about women and men in all their diversity?'

Next, we share some examples of visuals and assess whether they support gender equality or perpetuate gender stereotypes and gender biases.

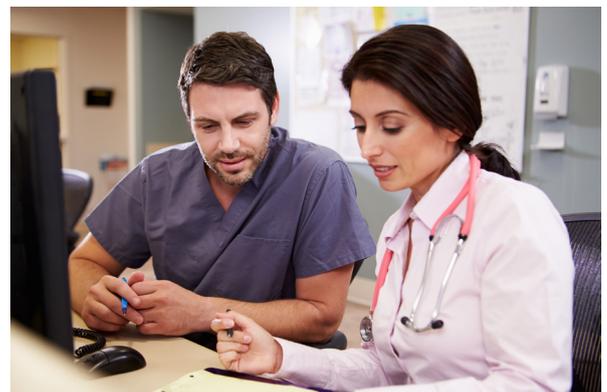
In the following examples of visuals of scientists and doctors, the photographs/illustrations put women and men in equal positions of engagement. Additionally, they use a neutral colour scheme, they present age diversity, and the body language of the characters depict both women and men as leaders in their field. These visuals could be improved by a wider diversity of ethnic backgrounds, body shapes and abilities.



The following examples of photographs/illustrations showcase caregivers beyond the traditional gender norm and expectation. Once again, these examples use a neutral colour scheme and present the message that all parents can take on childcare responsibilities. Depending on the context, we would encourage wider diversity in age representation, body shapes and abilities.



The following examples of photographs/illustrations depict women and men in equal degrees of professional status. One aspect of the colour scheme is gendered, however: the use of the pink stethoscope. Depending on the context, we would encourage wider diversity in age representation, body shapes and abilities.



## For videos

Videos have become a staple for most communicators. Videos combine visual, audio and language elements. In your video content creation, consider the following questions.

- Was there gender balance and diversity in the creative process to provide broad perspectives? This includes the writers, directors and editors. This promotes a more inclusive approach to content creation.
- Does the video context portray or consider a broader understanding of gender (including non-binary) and additional aspects of identity?
- Do behaviours align with inclusivity? Assess the behaviours of individuals portrayed in the video. Do not limit them based on gender stereotypes.
- Is there equal screen time for everyone represented? Avoid any disproportionate focus.
- Are captions inclusive and respectful? If applicable, review any captions or subtitles. Ensure they use gender-inclusive language and do not reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Is the voice-over inclusive? Review the voice-over script to ensure that it uses inclusive language. Check that it is free from gender biases.
- Does the music reinforce gender stereotypes? Evaluate the background music to ensure that it does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

*Exercise: transform this video script to have a more gender-inclusive tone*

### A hypothetical advertisement for toothpaste

*Scene: outside, on a running track, boys are running and people are cheering, with female cheerleaders in the front row. A boy, Johnny, meets his mother and a man while people congratulate him for the run.*

Man: Great race Johnny!

Mother: If only you would move that fast when I ask you to brush your teeth.

Johnny: Oh mom, I don't like the toothpaste you get.

Mother: We've got to do something about your cavities.

Man: Mrs Wallace, how about *Super Toothpaste*? Not only does it taste good, but test after test proves it helps fight cavities.

[Change of scene to the man's office]

Man: In one test, dental scientists compared *Super Toothpaste*'s formula with the best-known fluoride. Their report published in the *Scientific Journal of Dentistry for Children* confirmed that *Super Toothpaste* is unsurpassed in reducing new cavities.

Mother: Well, that means no toothpaste was found better for Johny than *Super Toothpaste*?

Man: Right.

Mother: And *Super Toothpaste* ought to stop that breath. Well, Johny, it looks like we are a one-toothpaste family again.

[Cut to an image of *Super Toothpaste*]

Male narrator: *Super Toothpaste* – the largest-selling anti-cavity toothpaste in the world.

[End of scene]

The following are a few questions to guide you in reviewing this script.

- Does the script show traditional gender roles?
- Is this a modern family with diverse roles for both parents?
- Are there specific roles attributed to the female and male adults?
- Who is providing knowledge / reliable information?
- Who has concerns about the well-being of the child?

## For social media

From institutions to individuals, everyone, in one way or another, uses social media to communicate.

Each social media platform supports different media formats, guidelines and audiences.

If your social media posts include video or visuals, consider the following.

- **Is the language used inclusive?** Ensure that your content uses gender-inclusive language. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes.
- **Are diverse perspectives represented?** Check if your social media content reflects a range of gender identities and experiences. This can help avoid perpetuating biases.
- **Have you considered ethnic nuances?** Be aware of cultural variations in gender norms. Ensure that your content respects and embraces diversity.
- **Are visuals, videos, illustrations and images diverse?** Evaluate the images used in your content. Ensure they depict a variety of genders in a positive and non-stereotypical manner.

- **Have you promoted gender equality in all messages where applicable?** Confirm that your content encourages gender equality. Make sure that it does not reinforce gender-based discrimination.
- **Have you considered the impact of hashtags?** Examine the hashtags you use. Make sure they are inclusive. Avoid inadvertently promoting harmful gender stereotypes or gender biases. For accessibility, you should use hashtags that capitalise the first letter of each word (e.g. #ThisIsGreat). Capitalising the words increases the readability of the hashtags for people using a voice assistant to surf the web.
- **Is the content accessible to all?** Ensure that your content is accessible to individuals of all genders and backgrounds. Consider factors such as readability, language choice and cultural relevance.
- **Have I conducted a sensitivity review?** Regularly review your content with a sensitivity lens. Identify any unintentional gender biases. Make necessary adjustments. A great way to foster a culture of feedback is to listen to your audience. In addition, organise internal reviews with a diverse panel.

### Improving a social media post to have a gender-inclusive tone

#### Original post

👉 Get ready to rock with the Metal Industry Association! Join us for an electrifying event showcasing the latest innovations and trends in metal manufacturing. Don't miss out on this metalhead paradise guys! 🔧 #Metalindustry #Manufacturing #Event #Metalhead #Rockon



#### Revised post

👉 Connect with industry leaders and spark new opportunities with the Metal Industry Association! Join us for an electrifying event showcasing the latest innovations and trends in metal manufacturing. Don't miss out on this great opportunity to connect! #MetalIndustry #Manufacturing #Event ⚡

### *The changes:*

- adapting the communication message and theme from rock metal to electricity and connection;
- changing the image to show less of a gender stereotype and more inclusive representation;
- removing the gendered word 'guys'.

### *Improving a prompt for an artificial-intelligence-powered tool to have a more gender-inclusive tone*

You can use an AI-powered tool (e.g. ChatGPT) to help you review, summarise or even create content such as video scripts or a social media post. AI is a powerful tool to improve quality and efficiency. However, an AI-powered tool can carry gender biases. Knowing this limitation and risk, we can fine-tune the content of the questions we ask the chatbot.

In the example below, we ask an AI-powered tool to create a social media post. Notice the differences between the first and revised prompts – the revised prompt will bring about a more inclusive outcome in terms of the content.

#### **First prompt**

*Create a social media post for a new marketing campaign promoting baby nappies. We will have a 25 % off promotion for Mother's Day.*

#### **Revised prompt**

*Create three proposals for a social media post for a new marketing campaign for baby nappies. The social media posts should address all parents and family compositions. It will have a 25 % discount code valid until the end of May.*

### **For voice-overs**

If you are developing video content, you may choose to use voice-overs to give your communication message a more personal feel.

Voice-over artists can add dimension to a story. When choosing the voice and tone, consider if it perpetuates gender stereotypes. It may influence your audience's attitudes and perceptions about the people in the story. For balance, include a variety of voices. However, if using only one voice, think about what is attached to a specific gender. Narration may also include a physical or visual aspect. We encourage you to consider diversity in all aspects. This includes people with a migrant background and people with disabilities.

Just like with other content creation, you can use AI-powered tools to develop an appropriate voice for a voice-over. To ensure the voice-over is in keeping with gender-inclusive principles, consider the following guiding questions.

- Does the voice-over carry a feminine tone in stories about gendered topics such as family life?
- Does the voice-over carry a masculine tone in stories related to technology?
- What ideas would this perpetuate about gender norms and roles?
- Does the voice-over use sexist and discriminatory words that reinforce gender bias and gender stereotypes?

## For events

When designing events, you will need to consider your programme, event design and audience. Events present a high-visibility opportunity to bring diverse perspectives to the table. Different insights lead to innovative ideas with inclusive outcomes.

When it comes to choosing your moderator, ensure they align with your approach to your topic.

Your moderator should act as your spokesperson by actively encouraging diverse participation, including from the floor, where relevant. Hiring a moderator with a diverse background is a good starting point to lead the way for a richer discussion.

From there, consider the gender balance of your panels. When taking questions following a talk, keep your language gender-neutral to avoid misgendering. For example, say 'Can I hear from the person in the green shirt?'

Consider other guiding questions.

- Have you reviewed the registration form for an event to ensure that it meets the needs of everyone?
- Are your panels and speaker compositions gender balanced to cover wider perspectives?
- Do the questions for the participants cover different grounds and angles for a balanced view on the topic?

### *Improving an event registration form to have a gender-inclusive tone*

#### **Original text**

EVENT NAME – Registration form

Please enter your information.

Contact information:

- Full name:
- Email address:
- Phone number:
- Additional information:
- Are you bringing any guests? [Yes/No]
- If yes, please specify the number of guests: [Number of guests]
- How did you hear about this event? [Options to choose: social media, friend/family, website, other]
- Any comments?

*Terms and conditions: by submitting this form, you agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the event. You also consent to receive communication regarding this event.*

#### **Revised text**

EVENT NAME – Registration form

Please enter your information.

Contact information:

- Full name:
- Pronouns:
- Email address:
- Phone number:
- Additional information:
- Are you bringing any guests? [Yes/No]
- If yes, please specify the number of guests: [Number of guests]

- How did you hear about this event? [Options to choose: social media, friend/family, website, other]
- Any comments?
- Any dietary restrictions? [Yes/No]
- If yes, please specify:
- Do you require any accommodations for a disability? [Yes/No]
- If yes, please specify:

*Terms and conditions: by submitting this form, you agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the event. You also consent to receive communication regarding this event.*

*Inclusivity and respect disclaimer: we are committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all participants. We expect all attendees to treat each other with respect and kindness, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion or any other characteristic. Discrimination or harassment of any kind including sexual harassment will not be tolerated. By attending this event, you agree to uphold these values and contribute to a positive and respectful atmosphere.*

## Event design

When choosing venues and materials, you should consider accessibility. This could include ramp access, gender-neutral toilets, baby-changing rooms for both parents and other considerations, such as the event programme being accessible for the visually impaired. Some suppliers are more sensitive to these topics than others, so ensure that you have a thorough briefing with them. Consider the following guiding questions.

- Is your venue accessible to all? Consider providing gender-neutral toilets alongside male and female toilets, as well as toilets for those living with disabilities.
- Does your event include a session related to gender-equality issues?
- Is the programme formulated in a gender-inclusive way in how it addresses the reader and topics?
- Does your event include sign-language interpreters for participants who are deaf or hard of hearing?
- Are you taking extra steps for people to feel welcome? This can include the option to establish pronouns at the event registration and identify any additional needs that participants may have.

## Conclusion and key takeaways

By the time this guide is published, new concepts are likely to have emerged to further strengthen gender equality through language and communication. This is an inevitable reality in a society in which language and communication approaches and channels are constantly evolving. The importance of promoting gender equality has never been more critical. The rise of anti-gender narratives and movements is a cause for concern and demands our attention.

We hope that this guide empowers you to make more conscious choices in how you use language and communication, recognising the different implications of various approaches. Starting small is the first step. Beyond the visual exercises included in this guide to address gender biases and gender stereotypes, take a moment to observe your surroundings in everyday life: during your commute to work, while roaming a shopping mall or when flicking through a magazine. You will undoubtedly identify messages – whether in text or visuals – that still perpetuate gender inequalities.

With the knowledge gained from this guide, you can become an advocate for change. One step at a time, you can lead by example and empower others to follow.

As a key takeaway from this language and communication guide, remember the main principles of a gender-inclusive approach:

- recognise and challenge gender stereotypes;
- maintain inclusivity by ensuring the visibility of women and men and girls and boys in all their diverse situations;
- uphold the values of dignity, respect and equal treatment.

From here, we encourage you to seek out additional resources from organisations that cover similar areas. Many of these resources are tailored to specific groups or communities, depending on their mandate, and they can help supplement your efforts to make language and communication more inclusive.

In conclusion, the journey towards gender equality through language and communication is ongoing and ever evolving. By staying informed and committed, you can play a crucial role in fostering a more gender-equal, inclusive and equitable society. Each small step taken, each conscious choice made and each stereotype challenged brings us closer to a world in which everyone is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Let this guide be the beginning of your journey towards making a lasting impact –one word, one message and one action at a time.

## Glossary: terms to expand your knowledge

Term	Definition	Source
Gender	'Social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as to the relations between women and those between men.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Sex	'Biological and physiological characteristics that define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as females or males.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Gender discrimination	'Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Gender equality	'Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Gender identity	'Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Gender-inclusive language	'Using gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.' 'Gender-inclusive language refers to language that places both women and men at the same level, and which does not convey gender stereotypes.'	<a href="#">UN</a> <a href="#">UN Women</a>
Gender-neutral language	'Language that is not gender-specific and which considers people in general, with no reference to women and men.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Gender-responsive language	'Gender-responsive communication is both an inclusive and a strategic tool for gender mainstreaming and a must-have skill for all development practitioners. It is a tool through which women and men are equally and fairly represented, benefit equally from resources and opportunities, and perform equal roles – a tool where gender balance is taken into account during decision-making processes and where stereotypes are questioned.'	<a href="#">United Nations Development Programme</a>

Term	Definition	Source
Gender-sensitive language	'Gender-sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men – and those who do not conform to the binary gender system – are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Gender-transformative language	'Gender transformative communication aims to change behaviour, attitudes and beliefs about gender, and to challenge power imbalances. It counters discriminatory gender norms through images, language or evidence. It does more than just make people gender-aware: It fosters real transformation.'	<a href="#">Friedrich Ebert Stiftung</a>
Intersectional discrimination	'Discrimination that takes place on the basis of several personal grounds or characteristics/identities, which operate and interact with each other at the same time in such a way as to be inseparable.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Intersectionality	'Analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
LGBTQI+	'Umbrella term used to denote individuals from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer/questioning community.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Marginalised groups	'Different groups of people within a given culture, context and history at risk of being subjected to multiple discrimination due to the interplay of different personal characteristics or grounds'.	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Non-binary	'An adjective describing people whose gender identity falls outside the male–female binary. Non-binary is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of gender experiences, including people with a specific gender identity other than man or woman, people who identify as two or more genders (bigender or pan/polygender) and people who don't identify with any gender (agender).' Note, some non-binary people prefer a gender-neutral name or pronouns such as they/them rather than he/him or she/her (see 'Personal pronouns').	<a href="#">International Organization for Migration</a>
Non-sexist language	'Avoidance of both an ambiguous generic masculine gender in the grammatical forms of nouns and discriminatory expressions which describe women and men in terms of their physical appearance or the qualities and gender roles attributed to their sex.'	<a href="#">EIGE</a>
Personal pronouns	'Pronouns are words we use to talk about ourselves ("I"), to someone ("you") or about other people ("she", "he", "they", etc.). In English, "he" and "she", called third-person pronouns, are gendered, while the singular "they" is gender-neutral.'	<a href="#">International Organization for Migration</a>
Sexual orientation	'Each person's profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and/or sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.'	<a href="#">European Commission</a>

## Additional resources

Publication	Content
<b>EU Interinstitutional Style Guide</b>	The Publications Office of the European Union has published instructions on gender-neutral language in its style guide. The focus is on gender-neutral drafting of texts and it includes useful writing tips. It is currently available only in English. Source: <a href="https://style-guide.europa.eu/en/content/-/isg/topic?identifier=10.6-gender-neutral-language">https://style-guide.europa.eu/en/content/-/isg/topic?identifier=10.6-gender-neutral-language</a>
<b>Gender-neutral Language in the European Parliament</b>	The purpose of these guidelines is not to constrain authors in the European Parliament to follow a mandatory set of rules but rather to encourage the administrative services to give due consideration to the issue of gender sensitivity in language whenever writing, translating or interpreting. Source: <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf</a>
<b>Fundamental Rights Agency Style Guide for Authors</b>	The style guide includes a section on avoiding discriminatory and offensive language and using gender-neutral language. Source: <a href="https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2019/style-guide-authors-2019-edition">https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2019/style-guide-authors-2019-edition</a>
<b>Council of Europe guide: Gender Matters</b>	This guide includes topics such as intersectionality, feminism and gender-based violence. Source: <a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters">https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters</a>

## GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

### IN PERSON

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you online ([european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en)).

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### EU LAW AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex ([eur-lex.europa.eu](https://eur-lex.europa.eu)).

### OPEN DATA FROM THE EU

The portal [data.europa.eu](https://data.europa.eu) provides access to open datasets from the EU institutions, bodies and agencies. These can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The portal also provides access to a wealth of datasets from European countries.

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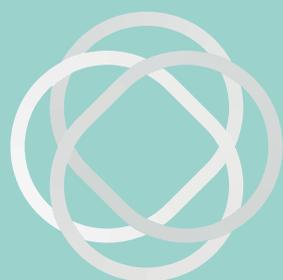
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