Guide for
Gender-Inclusive Language

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Background

Language influences the way we think and how we act and therefore should be used deliberately. Avoiding gender-based discrimination starts with language. Careful use of language and images can influence attitudes and expectations of the audience or readership, and this can positively affect people's consciousness over time.

To attain gender equality in language women, men and those who do not identify with one gender have to be addressed in language as persons of equal dignity, value and respect. The use of generic masculine forms contradicts to the fundamental idea of equality and therefore has to be avoided.

There are a lot of different strategies to use gender-sensitive and inclusive language. Some examples of gender-specific and gender-neutral language as well as literature with further information are presented in this guide.

Gender-specific nouns

The specific naming of a gender ensures that the gender feels addressed (e.g. in letter salutation or addresses).

Gender-specific naming of a person:
man/woman, Mr/Ms

An alternative to the generic „he" is the use of „he or she" (or alternatively „she or he").

Original	Alternative
Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring his money.	Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring his or her money.
The typical student knows what he wants to do when he graduates.	The typical student knows what he or she wants to do when she or he graduates.

Gender-neutral nouns

If the message of a text should be indefinite or neutral concerning the gender, there are different possibilities to avoid the generic masculine form. An alternative to the generic „he" and "his" is the use of „they", "their" and "them" in the singular.

Original	Alternative
Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring his money.	Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring their money.
The typical student knows what he wants to do when he graduates.	Most students know what they want to do when they graduate.

The use of the word "man" as in "man's impact" has the effect of excluding women. Alternative expressions, however, can be found:

Original	Alternative
mankind	humanity, people, human beings
man's achievements	human achievements
man-made	synthetic, human-made, manufactured

Stereotyped views of women's and men's role can also be expressed through occupations. To modify some nouns can help to avoid these stereotypes in occupations.

Original	Alternative
chairman	coordinator, moderator, presiding officer, head, chair, chairperson
businessman	business executive, business person
fireman	firefighter
postman, mailman	post or mail worker
stewardess	flight attendant, cabin crew
policeman	police officer

Literature

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