Inclusive Communication Guidelines

Summary

Introduction

Using inclusive language means putting the person at the center of communication. Inclusive language is welcoming and non-hostile; it turns communication into a tool for building relationships. Those who use inclusive language challenge stereotypes and prejudices, which are deeply embedded in society and in how we express ourselves.

As a company, we have the responsibility to put into practice the values of inclusiveness and respect in which we all believe, embedding them into our culture and everyday practices. By committing ourselves within our own environment, we can actively contribute to building a more open and inclusive society -one that we all hope to live in.

This document on inclusive communication is created within that context.

The goal of broad and inclusive communication is to accept, respect, and value diversity.

Inclusive communication is a communication strategy closely tied to the use of inclusive language - textual or audiovisual - that allows us not to discriminate against our audiences and is free from cultural stereotypes.

It is a useful tool for raising awareness about how our choice of words, tone, and behavior can influence how others perceive us, and how we can adapt our communication to be more conscious and empathetic toward different identities, cultures, and abilities.

It is important to remember that the evolution of language and the use of inclusive forms are ongoing processes. Language is dynamic and subject to social, cultural, and political changes, which means that this guide may also evolve and be revised over time.

1. General Rules of Inclusive Language

This document provides a set of recommendations aimed at everyone working within our organization. Through guidelines, practical advice, and real-world examples, it aims to encourage the adoption of non-discriminatory and respectful language that supports building an increasingly welcoming and inclusive company for all its people.

Regardless of the target audience, some principles always apply:

- **A person is not their characteristic**: a single trait does not define a person in their entirety;
- **Rephrasing helps to avoid specifying gender**;
- **Remember that gender is a spectrum**: there are not just two genders;
- **Use the right words with the right people**: glossaries exist to help understand the most respectful terms to use when communicating with others.

2. Disability

Disability is a condition that can be acquired or present from birth and may be temporary or permanent.

A person with a disability is not defined by it. They are first and foremost a person. Therefore, it is recommended to use the correct noun followed by the preposition "with": person/girl/man with a disability, person using a wheelchair, girl with Down syndrome.

Avoid expressions such as "suffers from" or "confined to a wheelchair," which carry implicit pity.

Prefer expressions like "person with visual impairment". When referring repeatedly to the same group, it is acceptable to alternate with terms like "blind people" or "partially sighted". For hearing impairments, use "person with hearing impairment", whether partial or total.
In the case of autism, prefer "autistic person".

3. Ethnicity and Skin Color

The main principle here is to avoid identifying people solely by their ethnicity or skin color. Instead, use geographically based terms (e.g., African American, Chinese) or adjectives like multicultural (e.g., multicultural community).
Avoid using the word "race" unless discussing the concept itself. The term "minority" may be used if accompanied by quantitative data.

4. Gender

Although Italian only has two grammatical genders, we must consider how to best express ourselves to include everyone, avoiding assigning specific roles to just one gender.
Avoid gender-neutral forms using asterisks (*) or schwa (ə) because they are not part of standard Italian and can pose accessibility issues for screen readers and other assistive technologies.
Example:
- ✓ "Gentili Collegh*" becomes "Gentili Colleghe e Colleghi."

You can still adopt inclusive language by avoiding assumptions about gender identity and using: gendered duplication (both feminine and masculine), gender-neutral or collective terms, impersonal phrases or rewording, as explained below.

5. LGBTQIA+ and Gender Identity

Inclusive communication regarding LGBTQIA+ people should avoid making assumptions about sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Always respect how a person identifies themselves, and prioritize the person, not their attributes.

6. Gendered Duplication

This means explicitly listing both masculine and feminine forms to avoid using the masculine as a generic.
Examples:
- ✓ "Gentili Colleghi" becomes "Care Colleghe e cari Colleghi"
- ✓ For past participles, masculine forms should follow feminine ones: "I lavoratori sono pregati" becomes "Le lavoratrici e i lavoratori sono pregati".

When speaking, alternate the order in which genders are listed to avoid prioritizing one over the other.

Duplication can be omitted for practical reasons (lists, menus, tables, web buttons, databases, regulations). In these cases, the generic masculine may be used.

7. Epicene and Collective Terms

Epicene words refer to both genders with one form, such as person, colleague, spouse - these are naturally inclusive and encouraged.
Collective nouns (e.g., staff, personnel, humanity) can replace male-dominant forms like "man" to refer to humankind.

8. Impersonal Forms

To avoid gender-related terms, use impersonal constructions or passive voice.
Example:
- ✓ "I candidati devono inviare il curriculum entro" becomes "Il curriculum deve essere inviato entro".

9. Rephrasing Sentences

Often, simply restructuring sentences - using synonyms, changing perspectives, or altering the subject - can remove gendered language.
Examples:
- ✓ "Grazie per esserti registrato" becomes "Grazie per aver completato la registrazione";
- ✓ "Benvenuto" becomes "Ti diamo il benvenuto";
- ✓ "Accesso riservato a utenti registrati" becomes "Accesso riservato a chi ha effettuato la registrazione".

10. Events

When promoting events, list speakers in order of appearance or alphabetically, and always use gender-appropriate titles.

11. Regulations, Resolutions, Minutes, and Certificates

In documents like regulations or minutes, full application of the inclusive guidelines may affect readability. In such cases, using the generic masculine is acceptable if a note at the beginning states this intention.
Participant lists must be alphabetized by last name and preceded by the appropriate title.

12. Forms

Both paper and online forms must allow for gender-inclusive responses. Use both feminine and masculine terms where needed and use slashes for brevity.
Examples:

✓ Il sottoscritto [space to insert the name] dichiara di essere iscritto" becomes "Il/la sottoscritto/a [space to insert the name] dichiara di essere iscritto/a";

✓ "Nato a" becomes "Nato/a a".

When needed, include gender options:
- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

If useful, allow a free text field next to "Other" for further clarification.
For legal reasons, sometimes it's necessary to ask for legal sex using only Male/Female options—this applies to quotas, statistics, or legal documentation.

13. Common Terms in Feminine, Masculine, or Epicene Forms

The list includes a series of frequently used terms in the company, expressed in feminine and masculine forms, or epicenes.

Laureanda	Laureando
Lavoratrice	Lavoratore
Operatrice	Operatore
Presidente	Presidente
Rappresentate	Rappresentante
Amministrativa	Amministrativo
Addetta	Addetto
Assistente	Assistente
Candidata	Candidato
Collaboratrice	Collaboratore
Componente	Componente
Consigliera	Consigliere
Consigliera delegata	Consigliere delegato
Coordinatrice	Coordinatore
Referente	Referente
Delegata	Delegato
Dipendente	Dipendente
Direttrice	Direttore
Dirigente	Dirigente
Docente	Docente
Dottoressa	Dottore
Funzionaria	Funzionario
Garante	Garante
Idonea	Idoneo

Impiegata	Impiegato
Imprenditrice	Imprenditore
Informatica	Informatico
Ingegnera	Ingegnere
Laureata	Laureato
Supervisora	Supervisore

14. Neutral Expressions

Use neutral expressions to refer to groups or roles, rather than individuals.

Instead of	Use
Gli amministrativi	Il personale amministrativo
I tecnici	Il personale tecnico
Gli studenti lavoratori	Coloro che lavorano e studiano
Direttori di funzione	Direzioni di funzione
Presidenti	Presidenze
Dirigenti	Dirigenza
Rappresentanti sindacali	Rappresentanza sindacale
Segretari	Segreteria

15. Communicating Through Images

Visual content must also be inclusive and non-discriminatory. Images are powerful in representing differences in gender, ethnicity, ability, and social class. They can foster community and social equity, especially when they avoid reinforcing stereotypes and promote balanced representation across all dimensions.

16. To sum up: The 10 Rules for Inclusive Communication

1. **Put the person at the center:**
   - Ask how people prefer to be identified.
   - Refer to people before describing characteristics (e.g., a person who is deaf).
2. **Use welcoming, non-hostile language:** avoid strict or prescriptive phrases when not necessary (e.g., The applicant must…).
3. **Challenge stereotypes and biases:** raise awareness and include minority groups when designing or reviewing contents.
4. **Be mindful of gendered language:**
   - Avoid generic masculine forms.
   - Use the feminine form for roles or titles when referring to women.
5. **Center the person when referring to disability**: use appropriate, person-first terminology.

6. **Ensure clarity when communicating with non-native speakers:** use plain, clear language.
7. **Make your language accessible:** choose readable fonts, structure your texts clearly, use simple syntax and common words.
8. **Pay attention to the choice of images**, ensuring they are equally representative, avoiding stereotypical color schemes and symbolic associations. Avoid conveying hierarchical relationships of inferiority.
9. **Practice inclusive language daily:** apply it in the texts you read and write.
10. **Encourage others:** share inclusive language practices and promote awareness.