



EDI GO

**Inclusive Language
*Guidelines***



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Inclusive Language
Guidelines



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Inclusive Language Guidelines

ABOUT THE PROJECT

“EDI GO – introducing the organisational approach to integration of equality, diversity, inclusion model in working with young people”

In various strategic documents the EU provided clear direction to encourage social inclusion, value diversity and promote equality of opportunities for young people (e.g. in the [EU Youth Strategy](#) and the Erasmus+ [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#)). In addition, in many European countries, these principles are the basis of youth work.

However, there is always the need to reflect, re-evaluate and consequently improve our youth practices and policies that we, as youth work organisations, have in our everyday practice.

The main objective of the project EDI GO is to support youth organizations working with young people through the strengthening and improvement of internal good practices promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI practices). This project led to development of the whole-organisational approach to reviewing one’s own EDI practices within different aspects of the organisation thus potentially initiating organisational changes.

EDI: WHAT ARE THEY?

Equality

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated less favorably. Equality seeks to promote fairness, be it access to employment or a program of study, training, development, career opportunities, etc

Diversity

Involving the representation or composition of various social identity groups in a work group, organization, or community. The focus is on social identities that correspond to societal differences in power and privilege, and thus to the marginalization of some groups based on specific attributes*.

Inclusion

An environment that offers affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences, thus allowing all individuals to bring in their whole selves (and all of their identities) and to demonstrate their strengths and capacity.

Discover more on <https://edi-go.eu/>

INTRODUCTION

The role and power of the language we use

Languages are ever-changing, following the changes that are taking place in the world. “Not only are there differences in spoken language between generations, but individuals change the way they speak throughout their lives.” (University of Copenhagen, 2016)

Language is the medium that maintains the reality in which we live. Given that this reality is often unfair or exclusive to certain groups, characteristics or backgrounds of people, it is necessary to observe and be critical of the language we use every day. Something that may have been acceptable a few years ago no longer is because awareness of a problem is greater now or some language solutions have proven inappropriate over the years. It is precisely by the choice of certain words, sentences or signs that we send a clear message about how aware we are of a problem in society or how sensitive we are to certain topics. It allows us to realize which individuals or groups are intentionally or unintentionally unfairly treated and even discriminated against.

Considering the complexity of everyday communication and the individuals or groups we interact with, there are many word choices that can become unconsciously exclusive. But it is also important to have in mind that it's not always what we say but how we say it. The use of language can influence or reinforce power dynamics in the workplace (Institute for Public Relations, 2021), and in various verbal and non-verbal ways encourage someone to feel isolated or accepted, to feel that their voice is silenced, or they have the opportunity to speak openly, which consequently affects both the working climate and the mental health of individuals. In addition, how we represent ourselves while speaking or listening is also important - are we sending a message of acceptance and openness to other people's ideas or views, a message that we are ready to hear and learn something new. At the same time, when we speak about other people and how we speak about them, it has a lot to do with how we collectively represent them in, so called, the power of representation of the other. This implies identification and recognition of all individuals which can be a powerful step towards self and collective acceptance, as well as a strengthening action of the role the people we're talking about may have.

This is especially important to be aware of when working with people, especially young people from different backgrounds, because youth organizations and youth experts represent the safety and support that is often lacking in the outside world.

Why to use EDI Inclusive Language Guidelines

Inclusive language means “the use of words, phrases, and expressions that are respectful, honor people’s diversity, and avoid exclusionary language”. (Farr & Olson, 2022) Use of exclusionary language most often is not malicious, but it may affect people's equity and may lead to a feeling of non-belonging.

Employing language that lacks inclusivity can sustain disrespectful, distorted, and derogatory narratives and assumptions about individuals or communities. Individuals who come across written materials containing stigmatizing and biased language may internalize these perceptions and develop opinions linked to particular words or labels. Consequently, individuals belonging to specific demographic groups may encounter heightened mental distress, internalized stigma, feelings of worthlessness, an elevated risk of alienation from family or social circles, diminished self-esteem (possibly prompting behaviours with associated risks), loss of hope, and a perceived or actual decrease in income. (Farr & Olson, 2022)

Therefore, it is very important that we, youth workers, make an effort to rethink the language that we use, to see how to make it (even) more inclusive and how to become more aware of possible injustices that knowingly or unknowingly may be inflicted with words. Also, it is important to keep in mind the intersectionality, both of our own and of the young people we work with.

The use of inclusive language indicates the acknowledgment of the existence of various injustices in society, and the wealth of diversity in society in a way that sends a message to interlocutors, in our case young people, that they are in a safe environment to feel free to be their full authentic selves.

How to use this document

You can use this document independently, but to improve EDI practices at all organizational levels, we suggest using it together with the [EDI Charter Mark Tool](#). A [proposal on how to use this document](#) can be found in the [training curriculum](#) developed in the context of the EDI GO project.

This document consists of 4 parts:

The 1st part is a **Glossary** in which some of the key terms that we can encounter in working with young people, when it comes to EDI topics, are highlighted in alphabetical order.

In the 2nd part, some of the *inclusive language principles* are presented that can guide us in different contexts when we are not sure which word choices are more inclusive.

The 3rd part of this document contains a table showing terms that we often come across when working with young people or various groups, divided into three categories: ***Suggestion to avoid / Suggestion to use / Why?*** This section provides practical guidance for language use, offering clear recommendations on terms to avoid and to use when interacting with diverse groups, such as young people. It helps you foster inclusivity by explaining the reasons behind each suggestion, promoting respectful communication and avoiding potentially offensive or exclusionary language.

The last part contains many useful links that will take you to the [EDI Charter Mark](#) and give you additional insight into how to make the use of language in your organization more inclusive, as well as an overview of how we can contribute to improving inclusive practices at all organizational levels.

These Inclusive language guidelines are in line with the English language, and in the following links you can find versions translated and adapted to the context of each of the EDI GO partner countries:

[Croatian](#)

[French](#)

[Greek](#)

[Italian](#)

[Spanish](#)

The limitations of using this document

This document includes words and examples that the EDI GO project partners have identified as important given the challenges they face in working with young people and the topics they work on in the context of their organizations. It is necessary to keep in mind that language constantly evolves, giving underrepresented groups a voice and recognition. This document is limited in time and place, having been developed in 2023 in Western society by partners that share common values promoted by the EU, meaning that words and expressions that may be useful in other cultural contexts may have been omitted. Also, language plays a role in the limitations of this Guideline, since there was no intention for the English version to be localised. When translating this version into specific languages, it would be useful to consider the specific local contexts, especially since most stereotyping and discrimination is connected to the local culture.

With this document and selected examples, we tried to cover as many different groups of young people as possible, their different backgrounds, as well as the language challenges that we might encounter when working with them. However, we are aware that many more examples are missing or need to be adapted to the context of different organizations, so we encourage you to use this document as inspiration for further research on inclusive language in working with the youth.

In addition, we believe that it is very challenging to include all the recommendations from this document in daily work with young people. Also, many recommendations will need to be adapted to the context of individual countries or the practices of individual youth organizations. However, we believe that this document can inspire you to revise your inclusive language practices, both in working with young people and in everyday communication, and always look for an opportunity for additional progress.

These Inclusive Language Guidelines were primarily inspired and created based on the guidelines from [Oxfam's Inclusive Language Guide](#) and the [Inclusive Language Guide from the American Psychological Association](#). It is important to point out that even with those two documents, there are sometimes disagreements about which terms to give priority to in different contexts.

We suggest that this EDI GO Inclusive Language Guidelines be a starting point for your interest in this topic and that you adapt its use to the various experiences of working with young people in your organization, as well as to constantly monitor changes in the field of language inclusiveness. Also, keep in mind the preferences of the various groups and individuals you work with, and if you are not sure, always check with them which terms they prefer to use.

Meaning of EDI (*Equality, Diversity, Inclusion*)

These Inclusive Language Guidelines are based on the EDI principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the core values of the EU, which recognises that societies are increasingly diverse in many respects, resulting in a greater need to learn to navigate diversity and to create inclusive and cohesive societies. In this line, the [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#) recognizes that young people have a specific role in society and face specific challenges related to uncertainties about their future, as a result of globalization and climate change, technological change, demographic and socioeconomic trends, populism, discrimination, social exclusion, fake news and now war in Europe with yet unknown effects on jobs, skills or the way European democracies work.

According to the EU Youth Goal #3 Inclusive societies, one third of young people in Europe are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, many do not have access to their social rights and many continue to face multiple discrimination, experience prejudice and hate crimes. New migratory phenomena have brought several social and inclusion challenges as well.

Societies are becoming more and more heterogeneous, and it is necessary to monitor changes and constantly question and educate ourselves because we can often unintentionally send a message of exclusivity or non-acceptance, even though our intention is completely the opposite. It is important to emphasize the importance of language practices, which best reflect the attitudes and perceptions of oneself and others.

1. GLOSSARY

A

ableism

Beliefs and practices that treat the non-disabled as 'normal', which results in discriminatory behavior towards people with disabilities, failure to recognize their potential, and unequal access to public and private places and services.

acculturation

The process by which members of one community adjust their values, ideas, beliefs and behavior to those of communities with a different culture.

African American

This term refers to American people of African ancestry. It is necessary to avoid the use of 'African American' for people of African origin in all parts of the world because it obscures other ethnicities or national origins. In that case, it is recommended to use the word 'Black', with a

capital B.

ageism

This term refers to prejudices and stereotypes towards someone based on their age.

ally/allies/allyship

Ally is the term that is used for a person who is aware of her (unearned) privileged position in society and is willing to use the privilege to change these unfair patterns.

Allyship refers to the active and conscious use of recognized privileges to confront bias, discrimination and inequality.

Asexual

This term refers to the absence of feelings of sexual attraction and sexual desire. Asexual person does not feel sexual attraction, but can feel an emotional attraction and realize a connection with another person.

Asylum seeker (person seeking asylum)

This term is used for a person who is seeking international protection, but whose refugee status has not yet been accepted. "Not all asylum seekers will be recognized as refugees, but every recognized refugee was initially an asylum seeker." (Oxfam Inclusive Language Guide, 2023)

B

bias

An inclination or predisposition for or against something.

- + **implicit (unconscious) bias** - refers to unconscious thoughts/behaviors toward an individual or group of people based on their gender, race, socio-economic status and other characteristics or preferences.

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People Of Color)

This acronym refers to people or communities of color to indicate that not all people of color face equal levels of injustice. (Check → *Race, Ethnicity and Culture - people/person of color - Why?*)

Bisexual

A person who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to people of different and the same gender from one's own. The term 'bisexual' is often confused with 'pansexual', which transcends the binary and refers to emotional and/or sexual attraction regardless of a person's sex or gender.

C

class privilege

Undeserved advantages, protection and access given to a small class of people based on their financial status, job, title, fame or recognition, usually to the detriment of others.

color-blind ideology

The belief that people should not be classified based on their ethnicity, culture, and race, but that all people should be seen as equal. The problem is that this approach denies existing social injustice towards all those who are non-white and makes it even more difficult to deal with racism (by not acknowledging its existence).

cultural competence

The ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with people from different cultures. It is necessary to keep in mind that the use of this term suggests that a person can fully acquire knowledge about a specific culture, which leads to stereotyping and bias.

cultural humility

Cultural humility means an understanding of the complexity of different cultures and identities, and always takes into account the differences between individuals within certain categories. It also includes the person's awareness that it is necessary to identify and understand their own culture and biases.

D

deadnaming

Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name (primarily associated with trans people).

discrimination

Different treatment of a person or group of people because of their race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and other characteristics or preferences.

displaced person

A person who has fled their home or places of habitual residence due to armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural/human-made disasters.

E**ELLs (English Language Learners)**

A term used in some English-speaking countries for multilingual learners in the process of learning English. ELLs often need additional support and they face discrimination due to their insufficient knowledge of the English language.

ethnic bias

Differential treatment towards individuals or a group of people based on their ethnicity.

ethnic identity

Sense of belonging to a specific ethnic group (includes cultural, social, linguistic, religious and often racial factors).

ethnicity

Social construct used to categorize people based on having a shared culture. It is important to keep in mind the difference between ethnicity and race - while race refers to categorization based

on physical characteristics, ethnicity relates more to social and cultural factors such as values, language, music, food, dress, etc.

G

gay

A person who feels emotional and/or sexual attraction towards a person of the same gender. It is most often used for men who are attracted to men.

gender

A social category that refers to attitudes, feelings and behavior that a certain culture associates with the person's biological sex. The term signifies socially shaped roles, behaviors, activities and traits that a particular society considers appropriate for women/men. It is constructed by societies.

gender binary

The categorisation of gender into two categories: male and female, which negates the existence of any other gender.

genderfluid

This term refers to a person whose gender identity changes and who may move among genders depending on the very feeling of that person.

gender identity

It implies a personal understanding and inner feeling of one's own gender, which may be in accordance with the socially prescribed definitions and formed gender roles of men and women or can negate them, transcend them and change.

Gender identities constructed outside the traditional gender dichotomy are called genderqueer or non-binary identities.

+ cisgender

A term used to describe a person whose gender identity and/or expression fit into social

gender norms determined for the gender assigned to those persons at birth.

+ **transgender**

A term used to describe a person whose gender identity and/or expression do not fit into social gender norms determined for the gender assigned to those persons at birth.

gender-exclusive language

This term is used to indicate the fact that language places all people in the category of male or into a binary category (man or woman). Opposite to gender-exclusive language is gender-inclusive language.

Global South

Global South refers to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, many of which have low incomes. Although the use of this term recalls the consequences of colonialism and imperialism, it does not take into account the differences in cultures and contexts of individual countries that this term represents.

H

human rights

Human rights are fundamental rights without which people cannot live with dignity as human beings, and they are inherently entitled. In 1948, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights laws that lay down the obligations of governments to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights were adopted. Basic human rights for example are: right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of movement, the right to work and education etc.

I

institutional racism

This term refers to the way that institutional policies, practices and procedures of institutions disadvantage different racial groups.

intergenerational trauma

The transmission of the consequences of traumatic events and experiences (such as abuse, natural disasters, poverty, etc.) from the generation that experienced the trauma to subsequent generations. It happens unintentionally, through early parenting and behavioral patterns that affect the next generation, and it shows symptoms like: lack of trust, anger, irritability, nightmares, fearfulness, inability to connect etc.

internalized racism

This term refers to the self-perception of diverse racial populations that they are powerless or less valuable due to negative beliefs about them that are present in society.

intersectionality

This term refers to the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination overlap and lead to complex inequities.

intersex

This term is used for a person who was born with bodily characteristics (chromosomal, hormonal or anatomical) that do not match strict medical definitions of female or male.

Islamophobia

Discrimination or prejudice towards the religion of Islam or Muslims in general.

L

lesbian

A term used for cis/trans women who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other cis/trans women.

LGBTQIA+

An acronym that describes people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer,

intersex, asexual + other people whose identities are not heterosexual or cisgender.

M

marginalization

Suppression of certain groups or individuals to a depowered position in society by denying them on a material basis or denying their participation in the social life of the community.

microaggressions

Intentional or unintentional expressions, attitudes or behaviors that communicate derogatory attitudes or notions towards individuals or groups of people, usually based on race, but also gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and other categories. Comments that diminish women's driving ability or more frequent security checks of people from racialized groups are just some examples of microaggressions.

migrant

This term is used for a person who has moved from one place of residence to another (within or outside the borders of their own country).

minority

This term is used for groups or individuals in society who have less power and influence compared to the dominant group. The use of this term may be viewed pejoratively, so it is recommended to specify (e.g., ethnic minority, racial minority, racial-ethnic minority) or, if possible, use the specific name of the group you are talking about. Also, it is important not to imply that members of minority groups are underprivileged.

misogyny

The hatred of and prejudice against women.

N

neurodiversity

+ **person who is neurodiverse / neurodivergent / neuroatypical**

This term is used to indicate the diversity that neurodiversity offers and to avoid negative stereotypes when talking about people with ADHD, autistic symptoms, dyslexia, dysgraphia, sensory sensitivity or other condition. It indicates that some people's brains work differently than what we consider typical.

non-binary identities

Gender identities constructed outside the traditional gender dichotomy (man-woman).

O

oppression

Oppression is a state that refers to unequal access to power and privileges for certain subgroups in society. Oppression is also a process in which certain subgroups with greater power use that power to maintain that inequality.

P

pansexual

A term used for people who feel an emotional and/or sexual attraction to a person regardless of their gender identity.

pathway programs

Programs that encourage greater access of marginalized groups to education, training or professions.

patriarchy

A system of social relations and structures in which men as a group dominate and exploit women. Based on hierarchical relations, power and male solidarity, patriarchy organizes society, culture and individuals, closely interwoven with class and racial stratification. In modern industrial societies, patriarchy can be analytically understood as a complex combination of six structural areas in which men have supremacy and exploit women: housework (unpaid work), paid work, sexuality, cultural institutions, legislation and male violence against women.

people of color

This term is recommended in comparison with 'minority' or 'colored people' who are considered outdated. However, it is preferable to use a specific group title when possible (e.g., Black students, Roma students, etc.)

pinkwashing

A term that denotes the practice of promoting LGBT+ rights with the aim of personal gain, such as profit, self-promotion etc.

PGM (People of Global Majority)

This expression is used to encourage people from African, Asian, Latin American, and Arab descent to recognize that together they make up the majority of the world's population (about 80%), contrary to the often-held opinion that whiteness is the global norm. It is also suggested to use the term 'majority world' instead of 'third world' or 'developing countries'.

prejudice

A negative preconceived opinion or attitude towards another person or group formed in advance and that is not based on reason or actual experience.

privilege

An unearned advantage that is available to some people because of their social status.

Q**Queer**

This term used to be discriminatory, but today it is used as an umbrella term that includes any sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to dominant social norms. It also refers to activism, movement, and theoretical direction (queer theory).

R

race

A social construction created by a dominant group of people by which people are categorized on the basis of shared physical traits, which leads to the maintenance of the power of the dominant group and the existing socio-political hierarchy.

racial justice

Racial justice implies the existence of a system that radically redistributes racial power in a way that systematically treats people of all races fairly, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

racial equity

Racial equity implies conditions without racial inequality and white supremacy, where race does not affect one's socio-economic status, educational, health and other opportunities and outcomes.

racial socialization

This term refers to intergenerational teaching of children, through parents/extended family messages, activities and behaviors, about the meaning of race and racism.

racism

A system of power that structures opportunity and assigns value to people based on their race or ethnicity.

- + **institutional** - unfair institutional policies, practices and procedures towards different racial or ethnic groups that result in continued unfair advantage/disadvantage to some group of people.
- + **structural** - a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial or ethnic group inequity in a way that maintains white supremacy.

refugee

A person who has fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and has crossed an international border. Sometimes it is important to point out that someone has received protective status, such

as refugee status, in their country of refuge.

S

sexism

Sexism is any form of expression (act, word, image, gesture) based on the idea that some people, usually women, are inferior because of their gender.

sexual orientation

A term that refers to who we are sexually, emotionally, physically and romantically attractive.

social justice

This term aims to indicate the rights of all people to equal opportunity to achieve wealth, health, well-being and justice.

stereotype

Generalization about members of a group or social category regardless of individual differences. They can be positive, neutral and negative.

T

tokenism

A term used in the context of the workplace for different practices that are intended to give the impression of inclusiveness (e.g., when a member of a minority group is hired to demonstrate that the company is inclusive).

transgender people

Sometimes known as 'trans' individuals. This term is used for people whose gender identity does not correlate with their sex assigned at birth.

- + **transgender man** - a person who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a man (or whose gender identity is of a man).
- + **transgender woman** - a person who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman

(or whose gender identity is of a woman).

X

xenophobia

An irrational feeling of fear, hatred or revulsion towards foreigners or anything considered foreign due to the belief that foreign cultures or individuals pose a threat to one's own culture.

W

white supremacy

The belief that the white race is superior to all other races.

weight stigma (sizeism)

Bias against an individual or group of people because of their body size.

2. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE PRINCIPLES

→ *Person-first and identity-first language*

In **person first language**, the emphasis is on a person or group, not on disabling or chronic conditions: 'youth with epilepsy' rather than 'an epileptic'. This is a preferred option for describing individuals and groups of people with a shared identity/identities. **Identity-first language** is more common among specific communities (such as the Deaf community or autistic community) and is often used as an expression of cultural pride: 'Deaf person' rather than 'person with deafness', or 'autistic person' rather than 'person with autism'. (Check → *Functional diversities - Deaf person - Why?*)

Choosing between person-first and identity-first language: Both approaches to language are allowed, and it is best to check with the person or group (if present) which approach they prefer. Otherwise, the best solution is mixing this language, and at the same time this means changing the way the speaker views disability and people within certain disability communities.

→ *Avoid idioms, jargons, and acronyms*

Many idioms, jargons, and acronyms can be unclear to individuals who do not have knowledge or experience in a certain area, and therefore cannot engage in communication. Also, many idioms have roots in negative connotations and even though they don't seem offensive at first, they can make some people uncomfortable.

(e.g., 'Long time no see' - this term is mimicking a non-native English speaker).

→ *Avoid phrases that suggest victimhood and euphemisms*

e.g., 'afflicted by', 'victim of', 'suffers from', 'confined to a wheelchair'.

When it comes to euphemisms, many people with disabilities consider them patronizing and inappropriate, so try to avoid 'challenged', 'differently abled', 'specially-abled', 'handi-capable' etc.

→ *Do not underestimate the concepts related to mental health*

It is necessary to avoid the use of derogatory names that come from the context of mental health ('psycho', 'crazy', etc.) as well as the use of the names of real mental disabilities ('OCD', 'bipolar'), as a metaphor for everyday behavior.

→ ***Avoid universal male language***

When, in a certain context, the gender is not of concern, the masculine gender is often used as a neutral. But research proves that the use of the masculine gender in language causes people specifically to think of males. (Konishi, 1993)

If the language you speak is gendered (such as Latin-rooted languages), it is preferable to include both female and masculine gender when speaking or writing about people. When it is possible and if it exists in your language, include non-binary or neutral terms. E.g., in the Italian language, there is a proposal to use 'schwa' instead of specifying the *gender* of the word (for example, in the case of the adjective 'bello' or 'bella' [means 'beautiful'] it is suggested the usage of 'bellə', thus getting the most inclusive result - at least in the written language)

→ ***Avoid violent language***

- 'Killing it' (suggestion to use: 'Great job!', 'Awesome!')

- 'Take a shot at', 'Take your best shot', 'Pull the trigger', 'Take a stab at' (suggestion to use: 'Give it a go!', 'Try!')

→ ***If you aren't sure, ask for a person's preference!***

3. SUGGESTION TO AVOID / SUGGESTION TO USE / WHY?

In the following, we will present terms and phrases that, in accordance with the [literature](#), we suggest avoiding/using if we want the language, we speak to be more inclusive. The terms and phrases are divided into 8 categories, and we are aware that many of them are still missing. It is not always easy to ensure that we are fully inclusive towards all groups and individuals. Still, awareness and continuous learning to be even more inclusive and more aware of possible injustices are necessary in everyone's work, especially us youth workers. When thinking about the suggested terms and phrases below, it is important to take into account the context of the conversation and

the interlocutor's preferences, because some less inclusive terms in the context of group work, e.g., 'mother' and 'father', may be completely acceptable in another context

It is very important and common for all categories to recognize and avoid terms that have negative connotations or that encourage stereotypes and prejudices. It is also important to avoid defining people according to their health issue or disadvantageous position. And maybe the most important of all: ask for a person's preference if possible, respecting individual autonomy and empowering them.

A) AGE

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● old person ● aging dependents ● elderly people ● the aged ● the elderly ● seniors ● senior citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● older person ● older adults ● older people ● older population ● older individuals ● people over/under (number) ● people 60 years and older 	<p>When it comes to age, use terms that people use to self-describe, keeping in mind both binary and non-binary gender categories.</p> <p>When writing about both young people and older people, it is necessary to use terms that express respect, while avoiding homogenization and patronizing.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● geriatric pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● advanced maternal age ● pregnancy at age 35 or older (describe the age of the pregnant person specifically) 	<p>If due to the context it is important to emphasize the age of the mother, avoid the term 'geriatric pregnancy' because it is outdated.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● infant ● child ● girl, boy ● transgender girl/boy ● gender-fluid child 	These are appropriate terms for an individual aged 12 years and younger.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● adolescent ● young person ● young woman, young man ● youth ● female adolescent, male adolescent ● agender adolescent 	These are appropriate terms for an individual aged 13 to 17.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● adult ● woman, man ● transgender man/trans man ● transgender woman/trans woman ● genderqueer adult ● cisgender adult 	These are appropriate terms for an individual aged 18 years and older.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● baby boomers ● centennials ● millennials ● Gen X ● Gen Z 	These terms should be used only when discussing the topic of generations.

B) FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITIES (COGNITIVE, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH)

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● able-bodied ● healthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● nondisabled 	<p>When we talk about a person without disabilities, it is preferable to avoid terms that indicate that a person with disabilities is not able to do things or is unhealthy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the blind ● person with blindness ● person who is visually impaired ● visually challenged person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● blind person/people ● person who is blind ● person with low vision 	<p>“People who have complete or almost complete loss of sight may be referred to as ‘blind’. Other terms are acceptable for those with a vision-based disability. “(APA, 2023)</p> <p>Although some inclusive guidelines recommend phrases like ‘people with visual impairment’, always keep in mind that some people may object to the term ‘impaired’ because of the negative connotation of the word. Also, check individual or group preferences if possible (look below at ‘the Deaf person’ example) and use expressions that do not have negative</p>

		<p>connotations and do not define a person by a health issue.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● deaf ● person with deafness ● hearing-impaired person person who is hearing impaired ● person with hearing loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deaf person ● person who is deaf ● hard-of-hearing person ● person who is hard-of-hearing 	<p>The American Psychological Association (2023) does not recommend the use of the word 'impaired' when talking about deafness because most individuals who belong to the Deaf or Deaf-Blind cultures prefer to be called 'Deaf' or 'Deaf-Blind' (capitalized) rather than hearing-impaired'.</p> <p>Also, it is often seen that the word Deaf is written with a capital D - for people who have been deaf all their lives and sign language is their first language.</p> <p>It is necessary to keep in mind various degrees of impairment.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● disabled person ● differently abled ● handi-capable ● handicapped ● mentally challenged ● mentally retarded ● multiabled ● physically challenged ● suffering with... [disability or condition] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person with a disability ● physically disabled person / person with a physical disability ● people with intellectual disabilities ● child with a congenital disability ● child with a birth impairment 	<p>The language used should be selected with the understanding that disabled people’s expressed preferences regarding identification supersede matters of style.</p> <p>There are some patterns—people with physical and intellectual disabilities often prefer person-first language, whereas the autistic community and people with sensory disabilities (e.g., blind people) often prefer identity-first language. (APA, 2023)</p> <p>Also, consider using the option ‘functional diversity’ or ‘person with functional diversity’ - this choice tries to approach the ability of people not in a binary possibility (be able or not), but in a variety of functional possibilities among the population.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person with special needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person who has particular requirements ● person who requires specific accommodations 	<p>The term ‘special needs’ should be avoided due to its negative connotations.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● crazy ● insane ● manic depressive ● mental defect ● mentally ill ● mental patient ● OCD ● Psychotic ● suffers from (condition) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person with a diagnosis of a mental illness / mental health disorder / behavioral health disorder ● person with a mental disorder / mental illness ● person living with a mental health condition / illness 	<p>It is necessary to use expressions that do not have negative connotations and do not define a person by a health issue, but rather to use terms that talk about people who have a certain mental health problem. If it is possible, we should be specific in naming the health problem they have.</p> <p>Also, between `disorder' and `condition', give preference to the use of the second term.</p> <p>Check → <i>Person-first and identity-first language</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● committed suicide ● unsuccessful suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● took their own life ● ended their own life ● death by suicide ● completed suicide ● attempted suicide ● person who has lived through a suicide attempt 	<p>The phrase `committed suicide' should be avoided because it is associated with sin or crime. It is also necessary to avoid the term `unsuccessful suicide', because it's not right to talk about it as something that can be (un)successful.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● drug user/abuser ● alcoholic/alcohol abuser ● addict ● smoker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person who uses drugs ● person with alcohol use disorder ● person with substance use disorder ● person who smokes 	<p>Check → <i>Person-first and identity-first language</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● (Illness, condition) victim/sufferer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person/people living with illness/condition 	<p>It is necessary to use expressions that do not have negative connotations and do not define a person by a health issue.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● wheelchair-bound ● confined to a wheelchair ● crippled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person who uses a wheelchair ● wheelchair user 	<p>Check → <i>Person-first and identity-first language</i></p> <p>Keep in mind that not all people with mobility issues use wheelchairs. In this case, it is preferable to use 'mobility impaired', 'person with a mobility/physical impairment'. (Oxfam Inclusive language guide, 2023) Also, keep in mind that some people may object to the term 'impaired' because of the negative connotation of the word.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● person with short stature / restricted growth 	<p>Suggested terms are respectful towards people with short stature.</p>

C) RACE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aboriginal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indigenous people 	<p>There is no generic term that will cover all the differences between 'the original peoples' of a territory around the world. But it was Indigenous people themselves who chose this term at the United Nations level, so it is acceptable to use it. If it's possible, name specific groups in the way that they wish to be referred to.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afro-American ● colored ● Negro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● African American ● Black 	<p>Although it is recommended to use the term 'African American', it is necessary to avoid using it for people of African origin in all parts of the world because it obscures other ethnicities or national origins (Nigerian, Puerto Rican, and others). In that case, we should use the term 'Black'.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) ● BME ● colored ● mixed race 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● people/person of color ● communities of color 	<p>Although the criticism of the proposed terms is that they reinforce the idea that being white is a standard, at the same time they can be used to create solidarity among racialized people or groups who are or have previously been minorities in campaigns against racism.</p> <p>Some inclusive language guidelines suggest using 'Black, indigenous and people of color' (BIPOC) to acknowledge that not all people of color face equal levels of injustice. At the same time, the BIPOC is considered by many to indicate a hierarchy among communities of color but also to homogenize the community of color, so with that in mind, preference is given to <i>to use</i> options. Pay extra attention to this topic, ask (if possible) for the preferences of the individual or group you are talking about, but primarily always, when possible, use specific terms when referring to different racial and ethnic groups.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● economic migrant ● expat ● transit migrant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● migrant 	<p>It is preferable to avoid conclusions about why someone is a migrant and expressions that have negative connotations. If you are familiar with it, use as much situational context as possible.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gypsy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roma ● Romany ● Romani ● Traveler communities 	<p>The term 'Gypsy' should be avoided as it is considered pejorative.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● illegal migrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● irregular migrant/ migration ● undocumented migrant/migration ● refugee ● people seeking... (safety, security, protection, asylum, etc.) 	<p>People cannot be illegal, only their activities.</p> <p>It is important that, depending on the context, you make a clear distinction between 'migrants', 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers'.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● mixed race 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● biracial ● multiracial 	<p>The term 'mixed race' should be avoided because it alludes to the existence of a 'pure race'. However, the term is acceptable if someone prefers it when identifying themselves.</p>

D) SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER DIVERSITY, GENDER JUSTICE

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● biological male/female ● natal/born male/female ● birth/natal sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● assigned female at birth (AFAB) ● assigned male at birth (AMAB) ● sex assigned at birth 	<p>It is necessary to use the suggested terms in order to respect the gender identity of all people.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gay and lesbian (for the entire LGBTQIA+ community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LGBTQIA+ 	<p>When it comes to the use of acronyms, there are different variants. It is possible to use a different acronym than suggested if it is necessary for your context to highlight some other community. It is important not to drop the letter T (for transgender people, as this could send a message of support to the anti-trans movement that wants to exclude trans people from the LGBTQIA+ community).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gender minorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gender non-conforming people (GNC) 	<p>It is preferable when possible, to avoid the term 'minority' because it labels groups and emphasizes them as vulnerable, instead of focusing on a system that is not fair.</p> <p>If it is possible, it is necessary to be more precise if it's important</p>

		<p>to convey information about exactly which groups we are talking about.</p> <p>The <i>To use</i> term is better in order to focus on an unjust system whose gender norms these individuals do not conform to.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homosexual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use specific, identity-first terms to describe people's sexual orientation (e.g., bisexual people, queer people) 	<p>This term is outdated and should not be used to describe a person's sexual orientation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • husband • wife <p>(unless it is necessary to define this gendered term due to the context)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partner • spouse 	<p>The <i>To use</i> terms are more neutral and inclusive when it comes to different types of significant relationships. However, this does not mean that everyone should call their partner a 'partner', if both of them feel comfortable using the terms 'husband' and 'wife'.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mother • father <p>(unless it is necessary to define this gendered term due to the context)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parent • parenthood • guardian • caregiver • person raising a child 	<p>The <i>To use</i> terms are more neutral and inclusive when it comes to different types of roles in raising children. However in everyday language it is understandable that most children and people will use terms 'mother' and 'father'.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● mankind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● human beings ● humankind 	<p>If we do not mean exclusively the male gender, but all people, it is necessary to find a replacement for the word that includes the word `man'. It is necessary to avoid language that implies that men are the default human.</p> <p>(similar with examples: `spokesman', `salesman', `policeman', etc.)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transgendered ● transsexual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transgender 	<p>According to the American Psychological Association (2023), the term `transgendered' suggests that there is a certain point in time in which a person became transgender.</p> <p>The term `transsexual' is no longer recommended and should also be replaced with `transgender', unless that term is the preference of the transgender person we are talking to.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● preferred pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● pronouns ● identified pronouns 	<p>The term `preferred' gives the impression that a person is appropriating a pronoun that does not actually belong to them.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● pronoun she, he, they, ze, sie, co 	<p>It is always better to ask people which pronouns they use than to describe someone as `he' or `she' based on their name or physical appearance.</p> <p>Unless it is necessary to refer to a person's gender or sex (if it's relevant in the context), it is preferable to use the gender-neutral pronoun `they'/'them'.</p> <p>Also, let's consider the use of the pronoun `we', which can send a message that we are more considerate of others.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● prostitute ● prostitution ● use of prostitutes/sex workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sex worker ● sex work ● women/man/people who sell or buy sex/sexual services 	<p>It is necessary to avoid words or phrases that deepen prejudices against the group of people engaged in sex work. The <i>To use</i> expressions are part of campaigns based on the rights of sex workers.</p>

E) SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● black market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● informal economy 	<p>It means work where there is no established agreement or contract between the employer and the employed, so workers do not have access to their working rights. The term 'black market' additionally labels people who are in that working position.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● developed country ● developing country ● underdeveloped countries ● first world / third world ● the West 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● high/middle/low-income country <p>(also learn more about <i>Global minority / Global majority, Global South / Global North</i> in <i>Oxfam Inclusive language guide, 2023</i>)</p>	<p>It is important to choose terms that recognize that the economic status of the country is situational. It is important to acknowledge the inequality and poverty within 'developed' countries, colonial history, as well as the unjust system that hinders the development of many countries. It is necessary to avoid concepts that imply that 'developed' countries have reached the full potential that 'underdeveloped' countries should strive to achieve.</p> <p>See also <i>PGM (People of global majority)</i> in the Glossary.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● homeless people ● the homeless ● transient populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● people without housing ● people experiencing homelessness / unstable housing / housing insecurity ● people who are not securely housed ● people experiencing housing or food insecurity ● clients/guests who are accessing homeless services 	<p>It is necessary to avoid homogenization when talking about the experience of homelessness, as well as to talk about homelessness as a characteristic of a person, and not a situation in which a person is at the moment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● low-class people ● lower-class people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● people who are of low SES / socioeconomic status 	<p>These <i>To avoid</i> terms are considered pejorative. But it is important to keep in mind that there are 'poor people's movements' that proudly point out that they are from the 'working class'.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● shanty town ● slum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● informal settlements/housing 	<p>Names of areas where people live but have no legal rights to the land, often not connected to basic infrastructure (water, electricity, etc.). It is necessary to avoid terms for these areas that have negative connotations and lead to homogenization and stereotyping.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the ghetto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● under-resourced area low socioeconomic area 	<p>The use of the term 'ghetto' has its roots in classicism and racism, so it should be avoided.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● vulnerable people/women/men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● people facing social/political/economic exclusion ● women/men who are in a vulnerable position because of something 	<p>Similar to the previous term, people are not vulnerable but are in vulnerable situations.</p> <p>The term vulnerable people should be avoided in order to express that the problem is not in the people themselves, but in a situation or system that is discriminatory.</p>
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F) PHYSICAL DIVERSITIES

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ideal weight ● goal weight ● `Your preferred weight is...' ● `Your ideal weight is...' ● overweight ● underweight ● fat ● plus-sized ● obese ● morbidly obese ● skinny ● bulimic ● binge eater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lower/higher weight ● `Your weight is...' 	<p>It is important to use simple, non-judgmental language which will respect all people, regardless of body size, and to avoid terms that label a person.</p> <p>Consider that sometimes the terms `fat' and `plus-sized' are acceptable - for example, members of the `fat-acceptance community' prefer to be called `fat' or `plus-sized' to normalize the existence of fat bodies.</p> <p>But be sure to check whether your interlocutors also prefer</p>

		<p>these terms before you start using them in conversation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● `Look at how much weight you've lost! I'm so proud of you!' ● `You look great!' 		<p>Comments on body size or body changes should be avoided unless they are justified in the context of working with young people. In this case, first check with the person whether it is okay for them to talk about their weight.</p> <p>It is also preferable to avoid other comments about physical appearance, even if they talk about someone's attractiveness, to prevent unintended consequences, mixed messages about people's health or appearance or even possible microaggression.</p>

G) SPIRITUALITY, RELIGION

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • given name 	<p>It is necessary to avoid Christian-centric attitudes.</p> <p>The same applies to holidays and customs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim country / Islamic country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim-majority country 	<p>When talking about countries or regions with one majority religion, it is necessary not to use names that indicate that only one religion is present.</p> <p>If the context in which you speak does not require the mention of religion, just use the name of the country or world region.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sikh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person who practices Sikhism 	<p>We suggest using a person-first language.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spirit animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • icon • muse 	<p>It would be preferable to use suggested options when talking about something or someone with whom or what you identify with. The use of the phrase 'spirit animal' can be interpreted as an appropriation of the belief of some Native American people in spirit animals or totems.</p>
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H) IMPORTANT IN WORKING WITH ALL GROUPS

<i>Suggestion to avoid</i>	<i>Suggestion to use</i>	<i>Why?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries • recipients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people we work with • programme participants • service users 	<p>If we talk in the context of the health and social care providers where people are directly receiving services or goods, we can use the term 'service users'. But in other situations where they receive support to realize their rights to food, shelter, water, asylum, political participation etc., but they are also actively involved in programs and are agents of their own development, we use the term 'programme participants'.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● capacity sharing 	<p>The proposed expression is preferred in order to emphasize working together and avoid a top-down approach.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● giving a voice to ● helping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● supporting/providing a platform for ● listening to, hearing, learning from ● amplifying/elevating the voices of 	<p>All people already have a voice, but it is necessary to talk about creating a space or supporting them to have that voice heard, without making it sound like that they got that voice from someone.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● is afflicted with ● is a victim of ● suffers from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● is affected by 	<p>It is preferable to avoid defining people according to their health issues.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● standing with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● in solidarity with 	<p>It is preferable to avoid 'standing with' in order to include people who are unable to stand.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● students at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● students who show lower levels of academic success 	<p>The term `risk' is acceptable to use to describe situations, not people.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● target population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● specific population ● group of focus 	<p>The term `target population' may be offensive because it is reminiscent of the term `population targeted for violence'.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● whitelist/blacklist ● whitewash ● black market 		<p>It is preferable not to use color coding to mean `good' or `bad' (to avoid associations of `black' as negative and `white' as positive).</p>

Embracing the practice of seeking and respecting individual preferences not only enhances inclusive communication but also plays a pivotal role in the creation of a more compassionate and understanding society. While acknowledging that adapting our everyday communication demands effort and time, it's important to recognize that each step toward inclusivity contributes significantly to empowering individuals, fostering stronger connections, and ultimately building a world where everyone's uniqueness is valued and celebrated. The journey toward a more inclusive society is a collective effort that, when undertaken with commitment, patience, and empathy, leads to a brighter, more harmonious future for all.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE USE IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING

In this section, you can find links that will take you to [the EDI Charter Mark](#), that can support organizations in reviewing their EDI practices within different aspects of the organization: [Governance / Leadership](#), [Building and Space Design](#), [Attitudes and Relationships](#), [Community and Partnerships](#), [Direct Work with Young People](#).

In the dimension [Attitudes and Relationships](#) under the topic [Language and Communication](#) you can find:

- *outcome* – explaining in which way the EDI values are visible in practice within the theme Language and Communication.
- *goal* – explaining what one wants to achieve by integrating recommendations from this theme.
- *recommendations* - providing suggestions of concrete steps to contributing to the achievement of the mentioned outcomes and goals.
- *good practices* – description of existing good practices and/or tools to support the practical implementation.
- *further reading* – provides access to already existing resources and good practices related to the theme Language and communication.

We invite you to study the entire document in order to gather inspiration and ideas for (further) developing your and organizational practice in the specific theme.

Also, we invite you to fill out the [EDI Self-evaluation tool](#) (the EDI support tool to the Charter Mark) and map your organization's practices that relate to the EDI values.

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