

Clear Writing and Inclusive Language

Organised in partnership with:

European Commission, European Parliament, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, Joint Services of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions & Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union.

Clear writing
for **Europe**
2021



Inclusive Language and Clear Writing: why ?



Inclusive Language and Clear Writing: a Love-Hate Relationship?

The advantages and pitfalls of calling a spade a spade

- Common points
- Potential conflicts



Examples

Common points

- **Getting your message across to all members of your audience**
- **Creating a good impression or improving reputation**
- **Promoting values**

Examples

- gender
- disability
- other aspects :
 - sexual orientation
 - race
 - age
 - diverse vulnerable groups

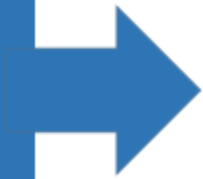
GENDER

3 types of languages : different challenges

Natural gender languages DA, EN and SV	Grammatical gender languages BG, CS, DE, EL, ES, FR, GA, HR, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK and SL	Genderless languages ET, FI and HU
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• personal nouns are mostly gender-neutral• there are personal pronouns specific to each gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• every noun has a grammatical gender• the gender of personal pronouns usually matches the reference noun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• there is no grammatical gender and no pronominal gender
Main strategy: NEUTRALISATION	Main strategy: FEMINISATION	Usually no strategy needed

GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUN

As a single
noun:



An applicant may submit
their complaint...

As a plural
noun:



Employees may apply
only if **they**...

Other ways to avoid gendered pronouns

- Omit the pronoun:

An official's leave entitlement depends on ~~his~~ age.

This is shorter, clearer too !

- Change the possessive pronoun “his” to “a” or “the”:

The candidate must submit ~~his~~ **an** application.

- Use the relative pronoun “**who**” instead of “if he”:

Priority will be given to an applicant **who** fulfils...

Gender neutral terms are descriptive

✗	✓
manpower	workforce / staff
housewife	homemaker
man-made	synthetic / artificial
mankind	humankind
fireman	firefighter

DISABILITY

x

✓

the handicapped

persons with disabilities

an epileptic

a person with epilepsy

the blind

people with visual impairments

confined to a wheelchair

wheelchair user

a victim of...

a person who has...

Other aspects of inclusive language

- ~~the elderly~~ → older persons /persons over the age of...

- ~~poor people~~ → economically disadvantaged person, person living at or below the poverty line

This can sound less clear because there are longer expressions, but they are far more descriptive, hence clearer and easier to understand

- When talking about relationships generally:

 - ~~husband/wife~~ → partner or spouse

- Ethnic background or nationality: be as specific as possible

RESPECTFUL TERMS

Start Using Inclusive Language	
Instead of:	Say:
“Black sheep”	“Renegade”
“Blackball”	“Ostracize”
“Black box”	“Box of unknown content”
“Black mark”	“Tainted”
“Black Friday”	“Friday after Thanksgiving”
“Black and blue”	“Bruised”
Clichés Perpetuate Bias	Respect People of Color

Potential conflicts

- **Main** challenge: readability/reader-friendly documents
⇒the importance of writing clearly when using inclusive language
- Avoid risking the clarity of the text by choosing inclusive terms that are established and recognisable to the everyday reader.
- The specific case of **legal texts** (use of generic masculine, or disclaimers) and our **EU multilingual context**.

Innovations that can make reading more difficult (examples in French)

Li corbe.au.lle et li Renard.e

Maitre.sse Corbe.au.lle sur un arbre perché,
Tenait en son bec un fromage.
Maitre.sse Renard.e par l'odeur alléché.e
Ellui tint à peu près ce langage :
Et bonjour, Monsieur/Madame di Corbe.au.lle
Que vous êtes joli.e ! que vous me semblez be.au.lle !
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Se rapporte à votre plumage,
Vous êtes li Phenix des hôte.sse.s de ces bois.
À ces mots li Corbe.au.lle ne se sent pas de joie :
Et pour montrer sa belle voix,
Iel ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proie.
Li Renard.e s'en saisit, et dit : Maon bon.ne Monsieur/Madame,
Apprenez que tout.e flatteu.r.se
Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute.
Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage sans doute.
Li Corbe.au.lle honteu.x.se et confus.e
Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus.

mère dévoué
fœmme de lettre
mæn tendre ami
veuf̃t ésseulé
l'amoureuꝛ rigold̃t

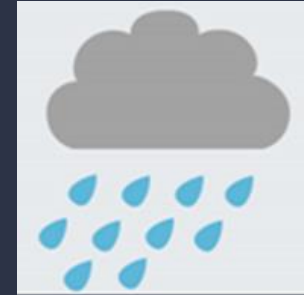
Typographic signs

InclusiF:*/(ve)?

Clarity vs Obscurity



- No unintended connotations
- No unconscious or unadmitted bias



- Strikingly new or bizarre formulations
- Too long
- Typographically challenging

Inclusive language