

# CHECKLIST FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION



Congress of Local and Regional Authorities  
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| Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the  
| Council of Europe  
| F 67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
| France  
| E-mail: congress.adm@coe.int

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## CHECKLIST FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

This checklist is intended to support the representatives of local authorities in planning and implementing their own communication strategy, including communication campaigns. It covers written and visual communication as well as physical meetings, and should be used as a tool for self-reflection. The checklist incorporates the key principles of inclusive communication, with the purpose of ensuring the consideration of inclusion, diversity and accessibility aspects within public communication.

### WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Inclusive writing avoids prejudices, slang, or common language expressions that discriminate against groups of people based on ethnicity, race, gender, or socioeconomic status.

Accessible writing also takes visual and cognitive disability in consideration by thinking about readability and plain language. Using Braille is strongly recommended. Alternatively, audio versions of the text can be used if the relevant technical facilities are available to the users. Inclusive writing also acknowledges that there are people who could benefit significantly from an increased font size or by reading a font that is dyslexic friendly, i.e. sans serif and with letters appearing less crowded, e.g. Arial or Comic Sans, or Verdana.

#### **Inclusive writing:**

- Use the preferred terms to identify your target group. Find out how the ones you are writing about prefer to be identified and use their preferences. For example, when writing about a specific ethnical minority or the LGBTQI+ community, research what terms are preferred.
- Consider that generalised groups of “women” and “men” residents of the municipality are not homogenous. For example, “women” also includes women from ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, single women, elderly women etc. Consider the needs of each sub-group when preparing written communication.
- Strive for a gender-neutral language.
- Be equal in your descriptions of people. For example, it is more common that women are described by their looks while men are described by their skills, and this is surely something to avoid.

- Pay attention to your internal jargon or administrative terminology. For example, the text should be able to be rephrased in a more common, daily language so that everybody can understand.
- When sharing examples, choose a diverse set of names and characters in order to reflect the real-world diversity.
- Define acronyms and abbreviations and explain technical or complicated words.
- Divide longer texts into shorter paragraphs for better readability.

## **VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

Images are powerful – what we see affects our perceptions and generates emotions. When we communicate through visuals it is important to reflect our diverse reality. If we tend to focus on representing only a small group of individuals, it is easy to create a false image of what the world looks like. Ask yourself: does the message of your image match the intention of the communication? And remember who you are trying to reach: would they feel included in your visual content, or have you excluded certain groups of people?

### **Selecting visuals:**

- Choose images with care and avoid such that reinforce stereotypes. Think about aspects like:
  - Gender
  - Skin color
  - Body shape
  - Family constellations
  - Age
  - Abilities/disabilities
- Avoid reinforcing the stereotypes. For example: One common stereotype representation is showing smiling women in casual poses, and serious men posing in a powerful way. Another one is showing men in active or leading positions, and women in passive or assisting positions.

- ❑ Pay attention to the actions of people depicted in the images and try to cover activities as wide as possible in order to be relevant to persons from different backgrounds. For example, avoid portraying only young people with digital tools, and only women in natural or home environments.
- ❑ Add an alternative text to your images when applicable, to make sure people who use screen readers can take part of your content.
- ❑ When sharing images or videos with text content, make sure the contrast between text and background is good enough to ensure readability.
- ❑ Always add subtitles to videos to make sure people with hearing impairment can take part of your content.
- ❑ Try to depict diversity in the visual material (persons using mobility and reading devices, person representing different ethnic groups, women and men, girls and boys represented equally, etc.)

## **VERBAL AND PHYSICAL COMMUNICATION**

An inclusive environment is a healthy environment. In our workspaces everyone should feel comfortable being who they are regardless of gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, skin color or religious belief. This applies to both physical and virtual work environments, in formal as well as informal meetings and gatherings.

### **Planning physical gatherings:**

- ❑ Make sure that an environment is accessible for persons with disabilities or provide means for alternative participation.
- ❑ Make sure all participants in a meeting or gathering know what is expected from them and what is on the agenda for the day.
- ❑ Do not assume that everyone knows what you are talking about. If someone is new, make sure to give a background description to the topic you are talking about.
- ❑ Ensure that all the meeting participants have equal opportunities and time to speak. Try to ensure everyone has the same amount of space and listen actively regardless of who is speaking.

- Describe people in equal ways. For example, people without disabilities are often described as normal or healthy, whilst people with disabilities are described as abnormal or unhealthy – this is surely something to avoid.
- Speak in terms of individuals with different backgrounds, families, and religion. Do not assume that there is a unified “we”. One person does not represent a whole group of people.
- Welcome different perspectives. Be eager to learn from people who has different experiences than you do.

The checklist for Inclusive Communication was elaborated by the elected representatives of the Georgian Forum of Exchange on human rights within the Learning Path for local authorities on anti-discrimination policies and practices in 2023.

The Georgian Forum of Exchange on human rights at local level is a unique platform for dialogue among thirteen Georgian local authorities to address challenges for improving social inclusion, promoting equal opportunities and incorporating a gender perspective in local political action, in order to eliminate discrimination. The Forum was created in the framework of the project “Strengthening Participatory Democracy and Human Rights at Local Level in Georgia”, implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Directorate General of Democracy, Division of Elections and Participatory Democracy, within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023 with the financial contribution of the Austrian Development Cooperation.

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