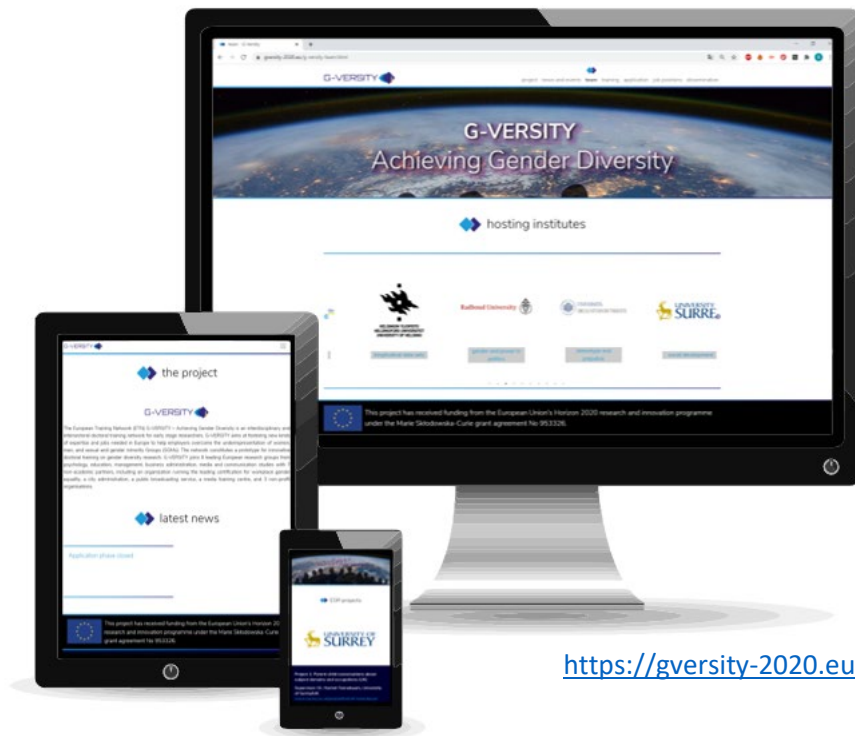


## G-VERSITY network

### Guideline series





<https://gversity-2020.eu>

## Deliverable report

### D 2.5 Integrated Model Gender Diversity

Date	September 2024
Lead beneficiary	University of Helsinki - UH University of Bern - UBERN Institute of Psychology of the Czech Academy of Science - PSU-CAS
Authors	G-VERSITY network
Dissemination level	Public

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## The network

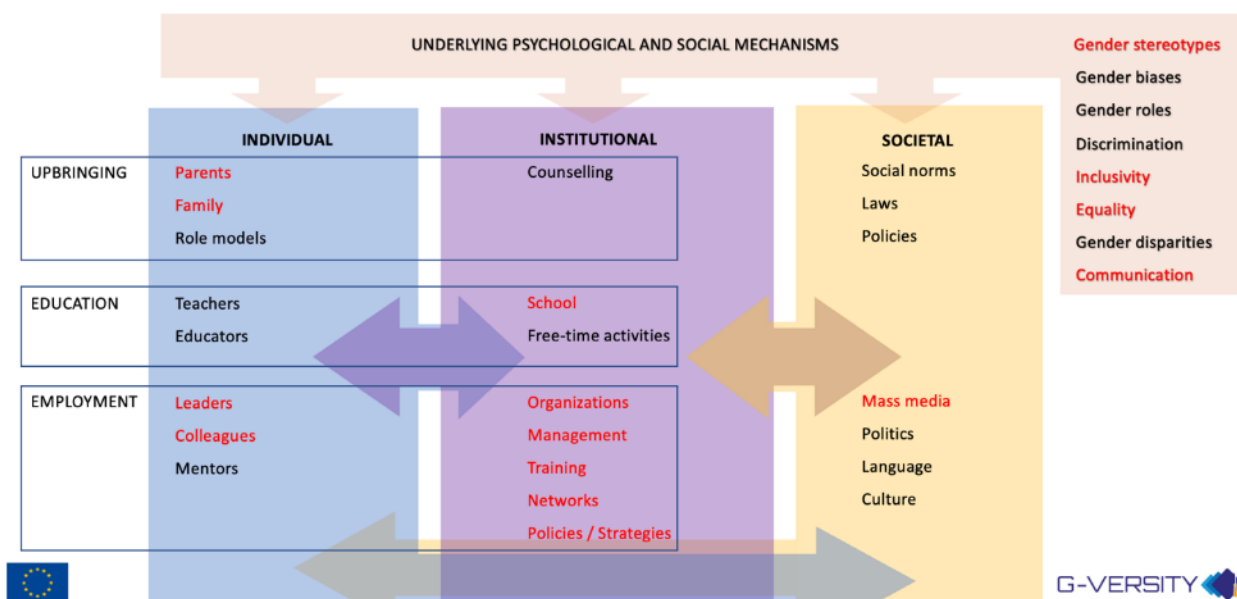
"G-VERSITY" is an innovative training network for young researchers in Europe. Within the framework of the "Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN)", 15 PhD students hosted by ten European universities. The ESRs worked on research questions and helped to develop interventions for employers as part of their dissertation. European research groups from the fields of psychology, education, management and economics as well as media and communications science cooperate in the network.

## G-VERSITY's integrated model of pathways towards gender diversity

The European Commission and the United Nations have committed to the sustainable development goal of achieving gender equality in education, political participation, and economic empowerment by 2030. To achieve this challenging goal, it is necessary to overcome the underrepresentation of women, men, and sexual and gender minority groups in professions and positions where employers seek a more representative workforce. However, employers have been held back by a lack of evidence-based interventions, tools, and methods to attain gender diversity – provided by the outcomes of the European Training Network G-VERSITY.

Establishing gender diversity needs to be conceived at different levels of influence: *individual*, comprising effects carried by individuals in their upbringing, education, and employment; *institutional*, the influence exercised by larger normative environments; and *societal*, the most generalized level of impact carried by e.g., language or culture at large; while also considering underlying psychological and social mechanisms that occur across the three levels.

**G-VERSITY'S INTEGRATED MODEL OF PATHWAYS TOWARDS GENDER DIVERSITY**  
at individual, institutional, and societal levels



On the *individual* level, gendered upbringing represents the first and key influence on gender-related self-perception and aspirations. Parents' play and conversations with their children often follow gender stereotypical patterns (i.e., language courses for daughters, science courses for sons). In addition to the family, other interpersonal contexts contribute to gender-segregated pathways to professional life. Later on in life, educators, colleagues, and mentors in educational and employment contexts modulate the private-set expectations regarding gender diversity.

On the *institutional* level, larger units such as schools and organizations represent independent normative environments where institutional culture can change or add to the individual- and societal level effects by introducing gender-reflective strategies, trainings, or opportunities for networking.

On the *societal* level, overarching unwritten social norms, established laws, and policies communicate gender-related expectations through mass media. On the most general level, language and culture modulate how people of distinct genders navigate their lives.

Across all levels, psychological and social mechanisms interact with the influence of distinct actors. Gender stereotypes, gender roles, and gender biases set expectations about what is (in)appropriate for people of different genders. Discrimination and harassment can be conceived as mechanisms guarding gendered expectations and punishing transgression of these rules. Actors at the three distinct levels differ with respect to the level of inclusivity and equality, potentially leading to gender disparities.

## G-VERSITY Guidelines

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G-VERSITY developed scientifically based guidelines, which highlight promising strategies toward gender diversity. These guidelines address effective gender diversity trainings, organisational communication, and best practice guidelines for gender diversity management.

### List of Guidelines and the links

- How to reduce gender biases in educational and professional pathway
- How to promote under-represented groups' career advancement in organisations
- How to promote gender diversity through media communication
- Organisational communication to attain gender diversity in companies
- Evidence-based practice: gender diversity management
- Inclusive gender diversity training in organisations

Guidelines are published on the [G-VERSITY](#) website and [Solutions blog](#).

# HOW TO REDUCE GENDER BIASES IN EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

*If you are a parent, a school director or organisational leader, these guidelines lay out evidence-based recommendations to assist in reducing gender stereotypes in parenting practices and school settings.*

1

## *What do we know about gender stereotypes and discrimination?*

- **Stereotypes** are beliefs people have about people of specific genders (e.g., women and men have different capacities to care for others).
- **Discrimination** happens when we treat others differently based on stereotypes.
- Passing on gender stereotypes to children (e.g., girls and boys are not equally creative or good at maths) can result in poorer school performance and result in gender stereotypical jobs choices later on in life.
- These negative outcomes can be reduced by learning more about gender equality.

2

## *How can this inform parents, teachers, and organisations?*

The development and understanding of gender begin in early childhood. Increasing awareness of parents, teachers, and schools of ways to navigate discussions of gender and avoid gender stereotypes can reduce gender discrimination in future generations.

### **Parents**

Parents serve as role models for their children and shape children's understanding of gender. Researchers have found that:

- boys raised in families with greater gender equality had more positive attitudes towards gender equality,
- girls growing up in gender-equal households were more interested in working outside the home and less interested in gender-stereotypical occupations.









For children at home, parents model gender stereotypes through:

 <p>Encouraging and discouraging different interests and activities depending on the child's gender</p>	<p>Providing different environments for boys and girls (e.g., different toys that foster the development of different skills; different clothes that signal a child's gender to other people and thus lead them to show differential treatment)</p> 	 <p>Emphasizing different topics in conversations with children depending on the child's gender (e.g., more demanding language when talking about science with boys compared to girls, also when talking about emotions to girls compared to boys)</p>	<p>Showing gendered division of work within the household</p> 
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Studies showed that these differences create disparate opportunities for children of different genders to develop their skills and interests. These differences also affect how children learn and take on gender roles. [1 2 3]

### Schools

For students in schools, gender stereotypes can show up as:

<p><b>Performance attribution bias:</b> teachers &amp; school leaders strongly associate students' grades and performance to the student's gender and talent (e.g., "The boys are doing better in math because they are naturally brilliant in math.")</p> 	 <p>Having different expectations based on children's gender (e.g., "The girls are going to have better grades in language") which translates into different treatment (e.g., providing clearer &amp; more positive feedback, teaching more difficult material for girls)</p>	<p>Assuming that children have different interests and learning styles only based on their gender</p> 
 <p>Endorsement of only agentic goals in classrooms, and little emphasis on communal goals (e.g., STEM subjects are emphasized as valuable for innovation and economic growth purposes, but not to help people)</p>	 <p>Highlighting gender as a relevant category by using gender labels in interactions with children (e.g., "good morning boys and girls!", "Good girl!")</p>	<p>Modeling gender-stereotypical roles and behaviours</p> 

Making gender salient in everyday activities can lead to increased gender stereotyping and acting in line with the stereotypes in children. Practices like dividing children into groups of girls and boys for activities or giving them different tasks based on gender can reinforce the belief that boys and girls are different and unequally good at different things, which has not been confirmed by research. [4 5 6]

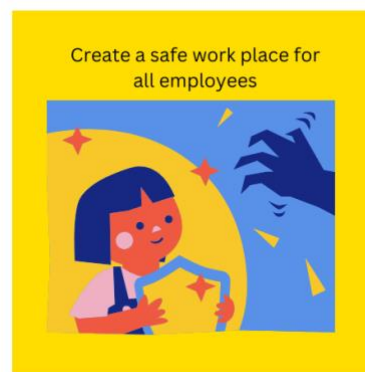


## Organisations

For school staff, gender stereotypes can manifest as “occupational gender segregation” or gendered division of labour in paid employment. It means that:



School leaders are responsible for creating a gender-inclusive work culture. To foster gender inclusive work environments, leaders can:



Recognising and addressing gender segregation within schools can allow greater gender diversity and well-being in workspaces. For instance, the allocation of work tasks can either reinforce or reduce gender stereotypes. As such, work tasks should be distributed to employees irrespective of their gender. Openly discussing and addressing ways in which gender stereotypes influence employees can help to create a safe and diverse workplace environment.<sup>[7]</sup>

### 3

## *What does this mean for you?*

Here are some points that research suggests everyone can do to reduce gender stereotypes and discrimination:

- [1] Gender stereotypes and discrimination happen because of the way we think and talk about gender
- [2] Consider the ways you think about gender and have conversations with others about how gender affects us
- [3] Teach and encourage children to pursue useful skills and attributes, regardless of their gender
- [4] Staying informed about what can reduce stereotypes and discrimination



## How can parents fight gender stereotypes at home? <sup>[2 8]</sup>

Create gender-neutral environments and avoid making choices for children based on their gender



Follow children's interests and support them irrespective of whether their aspirations are in line with societal gender-stereotyped expectations

Talk about gender biases and children's experiences



Monitor media consumed by children and initiate conversations about gendered character portrayals



Reflect on how gender roles are shown through actions and the way your family talks with one another at home



## How can teachers fight gender stereotypes? <sup>[9 10 11]</sup>

Use gender neutral language or gender inclusive language to lower children's endorsement of gender stereotypes



Avoid using gender as a criterion on the basis of which classroom activities are organized

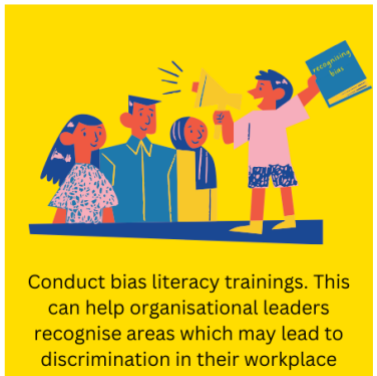
Shift our focus from "boys vs girls" to "which child, and what kind of support?" so we can fully focus on supporting all students' learning as individuals, regardless of their gender







### How can school leaders fight gender stereotypes? <sup>[12]</sup>



## 4

## Key Terms

**Gender-reflexive environments**—thinking about actions and beliefs related to gender. This includes one's own personal experiences and pre-conceptions about their own (and other's) gender. Gender reflexive environments create space for discussions about gender and ways in which the effects of gender could be reduced in specific areas.

**Mentor**—an experienced and trusted person who is able to listen, give advice and assist another person in achieving their goals.

**Gender stereotypes** - beliefs or expectations about how individuals should think, feel or behave based on their gender, or generalised beliefs about what roles and behaviours are appropriate for men and women.



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# HOW TO PROMOTE UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS' CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN ORGANISATIONS

1

## *What do we know about the career advancement of underrepresented groups?*

A positive and inclusive work environment is crucial for **career advancement**, fostering participation, **networking** opportunities, shared responsibilities, a sense of belonging, and psychological safety. **Male-dominated** workspaces often favour male members, limiting inclusivity and networking prospects for women, non-binary individuals, and men who don't fit the traditional 'heterosexual' and 'white' male image. These marginalised groups face stereotypes, sexism, and discrimination, which hinders their career progress by affecting their representation, visibility, mentorship, and leadership opportunities.

**Sexual harassment** exacerbates a toxic environment, leading to absenteeism, decreased productivity, and higher turnover rates among victims, particularly women. Women who experience **sexual harassment** are significantly more likely to change jobs and demonstrate reduced organizational commitment, work engagement, productivity, and performance.<sup>[1, 2]</sup>

Targeting of underrepresented groups undermines their ability to thrive in careers where they are already underrepresented, perpetuating gender disparities in careers.<sup>[3]</sup> Addressing sexual harassment is essential for promoting gender diversity and creating workplaces where all employees feel safe, valued, and empowered. This not only enhances employee well-being but also drives organisational success and innovation, ultimately benefiting organisations and individuals.

**LGBTQ people** in particular often face barriers in male-dominated fields, where their sexual identity can significantly impact their **leadership roles**. Previous research with LGBTQ people in leadership also revealed how participants felt a need to be "the right kind of queer"<sup>[4]</sup>; they felt pressure to exist in a way that would lead to acceptance. Therefore, it is important to consider what aspects of sexual identity one can disclose at work and what is seen as threatening or challenging to the status quo.<sup>[5]</sup> Recognizing and supporting the diverse experiences of LGBTQ people is crucial for their leadership progression. Organisations must consider how social identities and experiences influence workplace and leadership dynamics.

To overcome exclusion, **hostile** or **even toxic work conditions**, we need **policies** that promote inclusive **networking** and **diverse leadership**. They are essential for **career advancement**, offering mentorship, role models, and opportunities for



professional development. This involves addressing the under-representation of women, non-binary, and LGBTQ people in leadership and upper management. By implementing **diversity networks** and employee resource groups, organisations can create environments that support career advancement for all members. These networks should focus on providing equal opportunities, changing normalised processes, and fostering collaboration and understanding. By prioritising inclusivity and addressing the barriers faced by marginalised groups, we can create equitable networking environments that enhance career advancement opportunities for everyone. This comprehensive approach not only benefits individual careers but also strengthens organisational success and innovation.

<b>2</b>	<i>How can this inform workplace policies?</i>
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<b>Address Gender Disparities</b>	Policies should focus on increasing gender and sexual orientation diversity to broaden the pool of individuals with access to networking opportunities.
<b>Equalize Networking Opportunities</b>	To address challenges in networking within male-dominated fields like STEM, policies should strive to create more inclusive networking opportunities.  Strategies should be developed to open exclusive networks to a broader audience.
<b>Promote Empathy</b>	Policies should promote initiatives that foster sharing, understanding and empathy in the workplace. This can help break down barriers between different groups and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals.
<b>Prevent</b>	Implement policies, procedures, and training programs to prevent social discrimination from occurring in the first place. This includes promoting a culture of respect, diversity, and inclusion.
<b>Be Aware</b>	Educate employees about what constitutes harassment, how to recognize it, and how to report incidents. This ensures that everyone understands their rights and responsibilities and feels empowered to speak up.



<b>3</b>	<b><i>Best practices for diversity networks &amp; employee resource groups.</i></b>
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<b>Promote Diversity and Inclusion</b>	Policies should establish non-discrimination policies and create inclusive events/programs. This includes addressing power imbalances to promote accountability within the organisation, reducing the likelihood of harassment going unnoticed or unaddressed.
<b>Transparent Governance and Decision-Making</b>	Policies should establish clear guidelines for governance and decision-making within the diversity network. This includes transparent processes for electing leaders, setting goals and priorities, and distributing resources.
<b>Acknowledge Intersectionality</b>	Recognize that individuals may face overlapping forms of discrimination and privilege based on factors such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status. Programming, support services, and resources should be reflective of diversity of the network members to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment.
<b>Support</b>	Provide support mechanisms for victims of harassment, including confidential reporting channels, access to counselling services, and protection from retaliation.
<b>Continuous Improvement</b>	Regularly review and update harassment prevention policies and procedures based on feedback, best practices, and changes in laws or regulations demonstrates a commitment to creating a safe and respectful work environment for all employees.

<b>4</b>	<b><i>What does this mean for you?</i></b>
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*\*Recommendations based on evidence from research findings with minoritized groups in the workplace and leadership\**

**Case study (actual participant experience):**

A non-binary person who has a leadership role in their local government discussed how people at work have made assumptions about their gender identity and sexuality. When colleagues assume they are dating a man, it feels frustrating. Colleagues have also made assumptions that they want children, and for them this feels like another assumption about their sexuality. On the contrary, when a colleague asked a question about dating in a way



that showed they believed the participant could have a partner of any gender, they really appreciated this, and it felt validating. This person also described an experience where a colleague in a previous job commented about their underarm hair and this created discomfort. It created the sense that they do not fit in. They believe they are generally read as queer due to having brightly coloured hair, a partially shaved head, lots of tattoos, but the way they present is less about other people seeing them as visibly queer and more about feeling comfortable, allowing clothes/hair to reflect who they feel like they are on the inside. When workplaces that restricted self-expression, the way they had to present themselves felt uncomfortable, like in somebody else's skin.

*"Another colleague in the same team, when I was reaching up to get something out of the shelf, made a comment about me not shaving my underarms, as if it was like really disgusting. And that didn't make me feel great. It almost made me go home and shave just to kind of fit in, but I don't, it's really, really uncomfortable when I do that. It's really stressing, I don't like it, I choose not to shave my underarm hair. And that was quite an othering experience for me."*

### Learnings from this example:

- **Foster an environment that does not make assumptions** about gender and sexuality. Do not assume someone's gender or sexuality based on their appearance or other traits, or even by the gender(s) of their partner(s). If asking about someone's personal life, use gender neutral language to inquire about someone's relationship status (for example, asking if someone has a partner or partners rather than asking if they have a girlfriend/boyfriend or husband/wife).
- **Educate people about what constitutes harassment**, how to recognize it, and its common consequences raises awareness and empowers individuals to identify and report inappropriate behaviour. Understanding victim blaming and common misperceptions about sexual harassment helps to combat harmful attitudes and beliefs. This will **encourage people to speak up** about their experiences. **Listening carefully** to their needs creates a supportive environment where victims feel empowered to come forward and seek assistance is of great importance.
- **Be aware of prevailing norms** in male-dominated spaces, but also in other contexts. You might find that a specific group often sets the majority and defines what is considered the norm. This "normality" can lead to exclusion and a feeling of not belonging for others. Try to facilitate informal and diverse networking activities to help establish connections among colleagues. By providing opportunities to interact and build relationships outside of formal meetings, you can foster a sense of community and inclusivity within your network.



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# HOW TO PROMOTE GENDER DIVERSITY THROUGH MEDIA COMMUNICATION

*Media communication is more than just sharing information; it shapes perceptions and influences societal change. This guideline serves as a roadmap for media content producers, focusing on the need to consider the meaning of diversity, the target audience, and the broader impact of their work.*

## 1 *Critical understanding of diversity*

The term *diversity* has been used in a variety of settings to describe people's differing positioning in social constructions like race, gender, class, and sexuality. A critical understanding of diversity examines the social and organisational structures that cause the exclusion of social groups. <sup>[1][2]</sup> This includes the reflection of phenomena like racism, sexism or classism and their impact in shaping organisations and institutions. Inherent to this reflection is an understanding of **intersectionality**, that people can experience discrimination in multiple, intersecting ways based on their various identities. Intersectionality highlights that different power relations work together in shaping complex social inequalities and resulting exclusions. <sup>[3]</sup> The discrimination of a person can thus be the result of a combination of racist, sexist and classist attitudes. **Measures informed by a critical understanding of diversity aim to reform discriminatory structures rather than targeting individuals.**

## 2 *Reflecting on positionality*

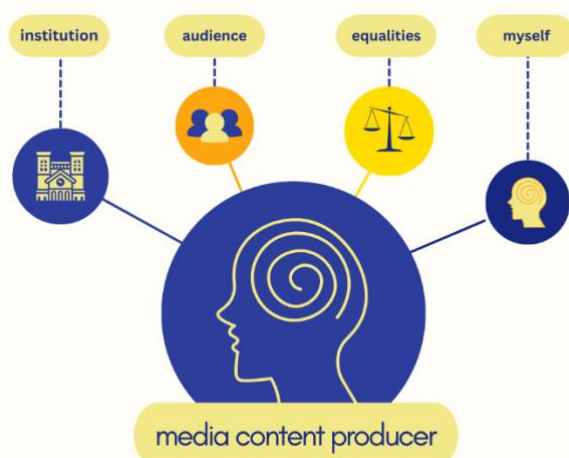
When designing media content strategies, it is important to reflect on our own positioning and the privileges connected to it. This helps avoid reproducing power structures and discrimination. Everyone is influenced by social constructions like gender race, sexuality and class –whether they like it or not. **We must think about how we are socially positioned regarding these constructs and which kind of privileges or exclusions we experience based on these.** For instance, we can ask ourselves: Do we experience sexism? What kind of disadvantages can people experience who do? In this vein, it is also important to think about who and what we regard as normal based on our personal, lived experiences. How does our perspective on what is considered normal shape our views on various topics, stories, and people? Are we aware of the images and words we are using to describe what is normal or different to us? Or are we reproducing dominant prejudice and stereotypes? Why are we using certain images to illustrate different things? This self-reflection is a crucial step that requires a great time investment.





### 3 *Media content strategy*

Embracing a critical understanding of diversity and an intersectional perspective integrates discussions and representations of diversity as a **core element of our media content strategy, rather than treating it as an afterthought**. It is important to reflect on how the strategy itself critically engages with inequality and does not reinforce existing stereotypes and discrimination.



### 4 *Checklist—Evidence-based practices*

- ◉ Avoid sensational story angles and headlines. Use evidence-based information only.
- ◉ Don't take your assumptions for granted. Ask yourself: Did I critically reflect on how my biases, attitudes, and beliefs influence my opinions and actions?

#### **Language**

- ◉ Make sure you fully understand the meaning of each term you use and avoid offensive language.
- ◉ Be deliberate and sensitive when you choose terms to describe different people.
- ◉ Avoid stereotypes in the terms and descriptions you use.

#### **Audio-visual**

- ◉ Make sure you use images and illustrations that are appropriate and reflect your organisation. Ask yourself: Is it necessary to use a photo of people here? Can these ideas be represented otherwise? What are these images telling the audience about the organisation?
- ◉ Check if the images used complement the content; always evaluate the relevance of the images to the texts.

#### **Format**

- ◉ Make sure your reporting is openly accessible for all audiences - think of vocabulary, accessibility, readability. Make sure your material is appropriately marked - use headings, alternative text for visual material, bookmarks, tables, and links.
- ◉ PDFs should always have an accessible alternative, such as HTML, Word, Text, or RTF, so it can be read by various programmes.



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# ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION TO ATTAIN GENDER DIVERSITY IN COMPANIES

1

## *What do we know about organisational communication on diversity?*

In the contemporary organizational landscape, organizations strive to **cultivate inclusivity** and attract talent from underrepresented groups. They often highlight the importance of diversity for both business performance and ethical considerations.

However, the effectiveness of diversity in enhancing performance is debatable, as it can either improve decision-making or lead to tension and conflict. Similarly, the perception of promoting diversity as ethical or unfair varies across different settings.

Organizations commonly express their commitment to diversity through various means, such as **diversity statements** on their websites, where they typically include a list of different identities or pictures of different groups that they aim to welcome.

However, different identities are not represented equally, for example, in European organizations listed in STOXX 600, *gender is emphasized at least twice as often compared to other identity groups*. Moreover, identity groups are frequently presented in isolation rather than intersectionally.

In other words, underrepresented gender groups such as women tend to be presented as a group independent from underrepresented race groups such as Black people, *hindering the overall goal of inclusivity*.

2

## *How can this inform diversity, equality and inclusion policies?*

Increasing diversity in organizations is a commendable goal, providing individuals from diverse backgrounds with *equal opportunities and a voice*. However, the way organizations communicate this goal faces **several challenges** that need to be addressed in order to more effectively achieve diversity outcomes.

Using non-inclusive language may incidentally exclude some marginalized groups.

Employing a **single group label** often fails to acknowledge the existence of diverse and intersecting groups.

For example, the first idea of a “*woman*” that comes to mind is typically a *young, White, straight, cis-gendered* woman, thereby neglecting individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups. An *older man* is typically assumed to be *straight*, and a *gay man* is typically imagined to be *young*, resulting in the oversight of older gay men.

Similarly, messages referring to increasing the diversity of other groups, e.g., *sexual orientation diversity*, may incidentally emphasize a specific gender category, i.e., *men*. The



conventional portrayal of individuals with marginalized identities tends to overlook intersectional identities, thereby **reinforcing stereotypes**.

Increasing the *perceived prevalence* of certain groups does not necessarily change the way in which their *status* is viewed as marginalized. Relying solely on numerical data to illustrate diversity within an organization may pose challenges because it oversimplifies the complexity of diversity. Numbers alone may not capture the full range of identities and experiences. This approach might neglect qualitative aspects, leading to a limited and potentially inaccurate representation of diversity within the organization.

### 3

## What does this mean for you?

Increasing diversity in organizations is a commendable goal, providing individuals from diverse backgrounds with *equal opportunities and a voice*. However, the way organizations communicate this goal faces **several challenges** that need to be addressed in order to more effectively achieve diversity outcomes.

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Even as organizations put significant effort into crafting the content of their diversity statements, they may overlook *the subtle cues* that can either hinder or facilitate the interpretation of these statements.

For example, the absence of **emotionally charged language** to underscore the content in diversity statements might lead individuals to perceive an organization as less inclusive than it could be.

### **Highly emotional words boost appeal in diversity statements for potential employees**

Using emotional language in diversity statements can significantly impact organizational image. Emotional messages can either *logically* convey the significance of an issue or *stir*



*similar emotions* in the audience. Our research reveals that only 67% of European organizations incorporate emotional elements in their diversity statements. However, existing emotional language levels are insufficient to boost organizational appeal among potential employees.

To authentically convey commitment to diversity, organizations should use potent emotional signals, such as "*We love that you are different, and we value it,*" rather than neutral expressions like "*We appreciate that you are different*" or "*We know that you are different.*"

Incorporating emotionally charged language, like "passionate" or "happy", enhances an organization's appeal. This approach helps organizations stand out and create a positive impact on employees, stakeholders, and society, in an increasingly diverse world.

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# EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE: GENDER DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

*Are you committed to fostering inclusivity in a diverse workplace? If you are a manager, HR specialist, colleague or union representative, these guidelines lay out evidence-based*

## 1 *What do we know about managing gender diversity?*

**Gender** is a multifaceted concept: it refers to broad sets of identities, traits, interests, roles, tendencies, attitudes, stereotypes, and socialization practices commonly associated with sex.<sup>[1]</sup> Within the workplace, **gender diversity** refers to an equitable representation of people of different genders.

**Intersectionality** adds to the understanding of how multiple identities (e.g., ethnicity, class, sexual orientation) in combination with gender can affect experiences in the workplace.<sup>[2,3]</sup>

Attracting and hiring employees from underrepresented groups is the starting point to achieve a diverse workforce (see Guidelines D2.2). **Organizations** should then focus on **retaining, managing, valuing, and promoting diversity**, keeping in mind the following knowledge from organizational psychology:

- Turnover rates are often higher among minority groups members,<sup>[4]</sup> which indicates that the **work environment** is often built for majority members (e.g., working hours, equipment, contracts). Moreover, communication climate and norms can vary.
- **Stereotypes** can influence many workplace aspects, such as perception of persons' competence (e.g., men are worse than women at caring for others); performance (e.g., stereotype threat) when minority groups performance is depleted in line with an unfavorable stereotype); tasks assignment (e.g., women less likely to be assigned leadership tasks); interactions; and expectations (e.g., microaggressions).<sup>[5,6]</sup>
- Comparing a number of different interventions has shown that **establishing responsibility for diversity** (e.g., affirmative action plans, diversity committees, diversity staff positions) has a significant impact on increasing managerial diversity.<sup>[7]</sup>
- When considering diversity, organizational studies have mostly focused on white, cisgender, heterosexual women – leaving **ethnic and gender minority employees** (e.g., trans people, men in women-dominated jobs) **under investigated**, even though they suffer the most from unemployment and workplace harassment.
- People share the universal need to simultaneously experience a sense of **belonging** and a sense of **uniqueness**. This also applies to the workplace, where organizations should foster a sense of inclusion and connection (belonging), while recognizing employees' individual differences (uniqueness).<sup>[8]</sup>
- **Psychological safety** is a term that describes a judgment-free work environment that encourages employees to be their full selves.<sup>[9]</sup> Gender diversity interventions have been more successful in organizations with high psychological safety.

*recommendations to assist in gender diversity management.*



Creating a **successful diversity climate** involves addressing various aspects such as strategy implementations, daily practices, communication norms, leadership dynamics, career pathways, and group interactions. **Gender diversity management (GDM) policies** should be adaptable and responsive, evolving with ongoing research and feedback to continually provide the best strategies to foster diversity and inclusion within organizations. GDM policies should not be written *about* minorities, they should be written *with* minorities.

- **Establishing Responsibility for Diversity.** Policies should include measurable goals, action plans, and dedicated diversity staff to drive meaningful change.
- **Retention Strategies.** Policies should focus on creating inclusive environments that reduce turnover rates among minority groups. This can involve targeted efforts such as mentorship programs and appraisal interviews.
- **Career Advancement.** To address the disparity in promotion rates for employees with minority backgrounds, organizations can implement transparent promotion criteria and leadership development initiatives that actively support career progression for all employees.
- **Creating a Climate for Inclusion.** Organizations should focus on shaping their daily practices, communication (e.g., pictures, meetings), and leadership dynamics to foster an inclusive culture. This can involve training programs, diversity audits, and initiatives to promote diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.
- **Balancing Uniqueness and Belonging.** Diversity training programs should emphasize both the value of diverse perspectives and the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive work environment (e.g., not asking minority members to adjust to majority norms).
- **Use Open Questions in Surveys.** When conducting employee surveys, use open-ended questions that allow respondents to express their experiences and suggestions freely, without being confined to predefined categories. Additionally, incorporate open-ended options when assessing gender identity.
- **Keep track of your diversity efforts.** Set measurable goals, use existing data to understand the diversity of your workforce (e.g., sick days, turnover rate), evaluate interventions based on literature.



### 3 *How can this inform interpersonal interactions?*

#### Give People a Voice

Encourage **open communication** and actively seek input from employees with **different backgrounds**. Invite people to take part in the **decision-making process**.

#### Address Different Perspectives

Structure meetings so that everyone is given a **chance to speak** and avoid group-thinking. Let **underrepresented** people speak first!

#### Avoid Tokenism

Do not consider or address minority members as **representative** of the minority group you assume they belong to.



#### Respect Pronouns

Do **not assume** people's pronouns. If somebody shares their pronouns, **use them correctly**. As a leader/representative, **sharing your pronouns** signals diversity competence and inclusion.

#### Foster Psychological Safety

Foster an environment where individuals **feel safe** to express their opinions, share their experiences, and take risks **without fear of judgment**.

#### Avoid Categories

Do not talk in terms of categories (e.g., men and women, leaders and subordinates) that increase **stereotypical thinking**. Instead, focus on individuals' **unique** skills, talents, and contributions.

### 4 *Key take-away message*

Gender diversity management is **collaborative** work: the efforts need to start at the top (**leaders, managers**) and build on research-based knowledge and competence (**diversity & inclusion experts, HR management**). It requires organizational resources (training, communication) and efforts from everyone (**employees, staff**).

When organizations prioritize **diversity** in both recruitment and **management**, they become more innovative, successful, and a better workplace overall.





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# INCLUSIVE GENDER DIVERSITY TRAINING IN ORGANISATIONS

*For those aiming at more inclusive gender diversity in an organisation*

## 1 *What do we know about gender diversity training?*

Gender diversity training is undertaken by organisations to foster awareness, empathy, and respect for individuals, promote diversity and inclusion within the organization, reduce discrimination and harassment based on gender identity or expression, and ultimately create a more equitable and supportive environment for everyone. <sup>[1 2]</sup> It is a key part of organizations' efforts to reduce bias, influence the representation of underrepresented identities in the workplace and in leadership roles, and promote inclusion in workplaces. <sup>[3]</sup> Inclusion entails recognizing and valuing the unique contributions and perspectives that each individual brings, and creating environments that celebrate diversity, promote social equality, and foster a sense of belonging for all.

Existing guidelines provide professional trainers with manuals for gender diversity training. <sup>[4 5]</sup> These manuals provide valuable information and suggestions but are also open for improvement. For example, they reproduce a binary understanding of gender, they are mainly based on literature derived from a Western context and they tend to other women from the global south.

### **Scholars criticize these trainings for lacking a power dimension**

- Power encompasses the multifaceted mechanisms through which individuals or groups exert influence, control, and dominance within organizational and societal structures, intersecting with issues of inequality and social justice.

### **Scholars identify the importance of communion for inclusion in the**

- Communion refers to all social information describing to the ability to connect and interact with others (i.e., warmth and morality).

### **Scholars criticize trainings for lacking doing justice to experiences of people from multiple backgrounds**

- Incorporate intersectionality into gender diversity trainings as it enables acknowledgement of interconnectedness of social categories <sup>[6]</sup> and experiences resulting in a more nuanced understanding of diversity and inequality.



2

## Why is it important to make gender diversity trainings inclusive?

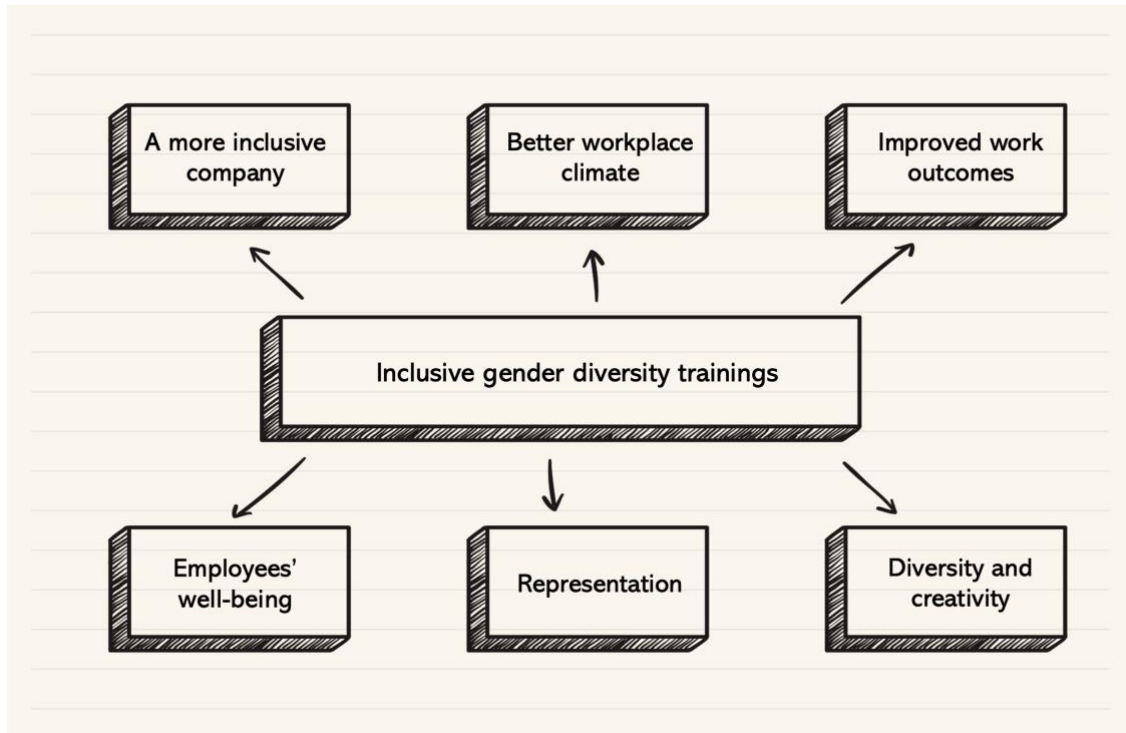


Image by Yirou Fang

3

## Inclusive gender diversity trainings can start with...

### Before the training:

- Ask who has access to the training and how you can be as inclusive in inviting people as you can.
- Think about the similarities and differences between participants.
- Integrate a non-binary understanding of gender.
  - use this language and these examples, avoid these assumptions, for example ask pronouns.

### During the training:

- Take an intersectional perspective into account.
- Be explicit about your own positionality as a trainer.
  - briefly tell your story and in it reflect upon your visual and non-visual diversity dimensions.
- Make sure that gender diversity trainings pay attention to the need for emotional support among their participants.
  - encourage people, be emphatic and aware.



- Make sure that trainers of their own power position and the power dynamics of the organization in which the trainees work:
  - give voice and agency to participants and so incorporate different experiences.

During the training, **about the content:**

- Understand barriers for access to organizations.
  - some barriers are common ground for different genders, some are gender specific.
- Address barriers in general by providing information about difficulties.
- Break gender stereotypes about agentic and communal behaviour by providing information about counter stereotypical role models [7].
- Pay attention to team co-operation and the importance of a good atmosphere.
- Address the dimension of power in the training.
  - interrogate dominant norms, discuss how privilege works and hierarchical structures operate.

## 4 *Some notes on best practices*

**Do:**

- Address the dimension of power in the training.
  - interrogate dominant norms, discuss how privilege works and hierarchical structures operate.
- Pay attention to the communion dimension in organizations during the training.
  - be aware of the importance of atmosphere, team dimensions.
- Create space for trainees to share experiences in the workplace and validate these experiences, providing emotional support.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of training in fostering inclusive behaviour in organisations.
  - This may support organisations in adopting the training.

**Avoid:**

- Window-dressing when providing role models.
- Gender stereotypes about agentic and communal behaviour.
- Assumptions about cultural backgrounds.
- Assumptions about the agency, or lack thereof, of women from the global south.
- Generalising the experiences of women (or any gender).
- Universalizing knowledge about barriers for access to the organizations
  - some barriers are common ground for different genders, some are gender specific. Address barriers in general by providing information about difficulties.



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