

# GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ARE KEY DRIVERS FOR INNOVATION.

*“Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union, but it is not yet a reality. In business, politics and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity. Using only half of the population, half of the ideas or half of the energy is not good enough.”*

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission (March 2020): Striving for a Union of Equality – The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.\*

## Why do gender equality and diversity matter?

A corporate culture that builds on diversity of its workforce – in terms of sex, social gender or gender identity, as well as origin, nationality and age – has a positive impact on the company's innovativeness, reputation and success. A respective corporate communication strategy, building on gender-inclusive and diversity-sensitive language and visual material, positively affects both work performance and work environment (see figure 1). This not only conveys an equal valuing of all employees, but contributes to the inclusion of all persons in the company and its wider business environment.



However, companies are often lagging behind when it comes to implementing gender equality and diversity. In the field of battery cell production, for instance, women are significantly underrepresented, especially in management positions. In view of a potential labour shortage in this domain, companies should thus make the best possible use of the entire workforce potential.

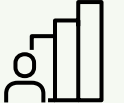
## Who should pay particular attention to gender-inclusive and diversity-sensitive communication?

This handout is addressing particularly experts who publish or appear in public, executives, role models and multipliers, as well as all those working in recruiting, public relations and event organisation.



Figure 1: Companies with inclusive culture are ...

**2x**   
more likely to meet or exceed financial targets

**3x**   
more likely to be high-performing

**6x**   
more likely to be innovative and agile

**8x**   
more likely to achieve better business outcomes

Adapted from: Juliet Bourke, Which two Heads Are Better Than One? How Diverse Teams Create Breakthrough Ideas and Make Smart Decisions (Australian Institute of Company Direction, 2016)\*\*

\*\* Source: [The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths, 2018.](#)

\*Source: [Striving for a Union of Equality – The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, 2020.](#)

## What is the goal?

In view of the significant benefits, gender-inclusiveness and diversity shall become an integral part of corporate communication. Results of a study show that companies with a greater gender diversity on executive teams show greater financial performance (see Figure 2).

## How should this be implemented in language, designs, events etc.?

- Make diversity visible
- Pay attention to gender balance
- Consciously break with stereotypes

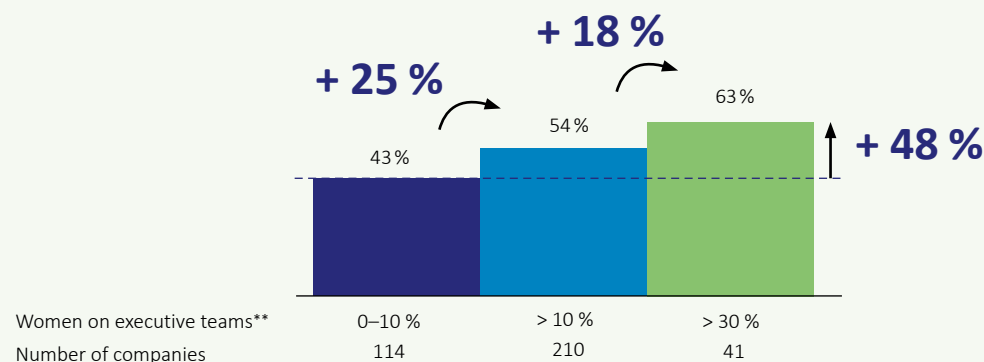
### Language

Using gender-inclusive and non-discriminatory language avoids discrimination against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, or continuation of gender stereotypes.

- Use gender-neutral forms for roles, titles and professions  
**Example:** spokesperson, chairperson, businessperson, police officer, staff, workforce, person, individual, humankind.
- Address audience, readers, and recipients without specifying gender.  
**Example:** “Dear participants”, “To whom it may concern”
- Use the possessive pronouns **one’s** or a **person’s** instead of the possessive pronouns his or hers, and the pronoun **one** or **who** instead of he or she.  
**Example:** An engineer in London earns more than one in Edinburgh. A staff member who needs more information can report to me.
- Use the passive voice.  
**Example:** The project partner ensures that the deliverable is submitted in time.

**Figure 2: Executive teams with more than 30 % women are more likely to outperform those with fewer or no women**

Likelihood of financial outperformance\*, 2014



\* Likelihood of financial outperformance vs the national industry median.

\*\* n = 365; US and UK; EBIT 2014-2018.

Source: [McKinsey & Company, Diversity wins - How inclusion matters, 2020](#)

- In general: Use plural forms and plural antecedents to avoid singular pronouns she/her/hers and he/him/his  
**Example:** Participants will receive their badges at the registration desk.
- In particular: Use **they/them/their** for a single person whose gender identity is non-binary (informal, not yet established in formal writing).  
**Example:** A client presented themselves at the office today.
- Refer to or address individuals using forms and pronouns consistent with their gender identity, if the gender identity is known.  
**Example:** Professor Hague and **her/his/their** students.
- Be consistent in the way of addressing or referring to individuals. If one of them is addressed by their name, last name, title, or profession, the others should be as well.  
**Example:** Prof. Hague and Dr. Miles

**Suggestion:** Try introducing yourself and your pronouns, include them in your email signature or nametag. This can invite others to share their pronouns too.



- Avoid gender-bias and gender stereotypes.

**Example:** Ask interview partners relevant questions, and complement on their expertise and knowledgeability independent of their gender.



Example of a diversity-sensitive picture

### Visual design and illustration

- Choose diverse group compositions.
- Show all persons at the same level in terms of gestures, facial expressions and position or even create images that are deliberately in contrast to the stereotype.
- In case of captions or subtitles, integrate the above suggestions on gender-inclusive and non-discriminatory language.

### For events

- Pay attention to diversity and gender balance in the programme concept, in the organising team, in the speaker line-up and in press photos.
- Avoid stereotypes when distributing roles.
- Use gender-inclusive and non-discriminatory language in documents and presentations.



Create your own table of frequently used expressions and their gender-neutral forms.

**More information and examples**  
[www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml)



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