Gender-Sensitive Language

European Institute for Gender Equality

Definition

Gender-sensitive language is the realisation of gender equality in written and spoken language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men and those who do not conform to the binary gender system are made visible and addressed in language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect.

Avoiding sex- and gender-based discrimination starts with language, as the systematic use of gender-biased terminology influences attitudes and expectations and could, in the mind of the reader or listener, relegate women to the background or help perpetuate a stereotyped view of women's and men's roles. There are number of different strategies that can be used to express gender relationships with accuracy, such as avoiding, to the greatest possible extent, the use of language that refers explicitly or implicitly to only one gender, and ensuring, through inclusionary alternatives and according to each language's characteristics, the use of gender-sensitive and inclusive language.