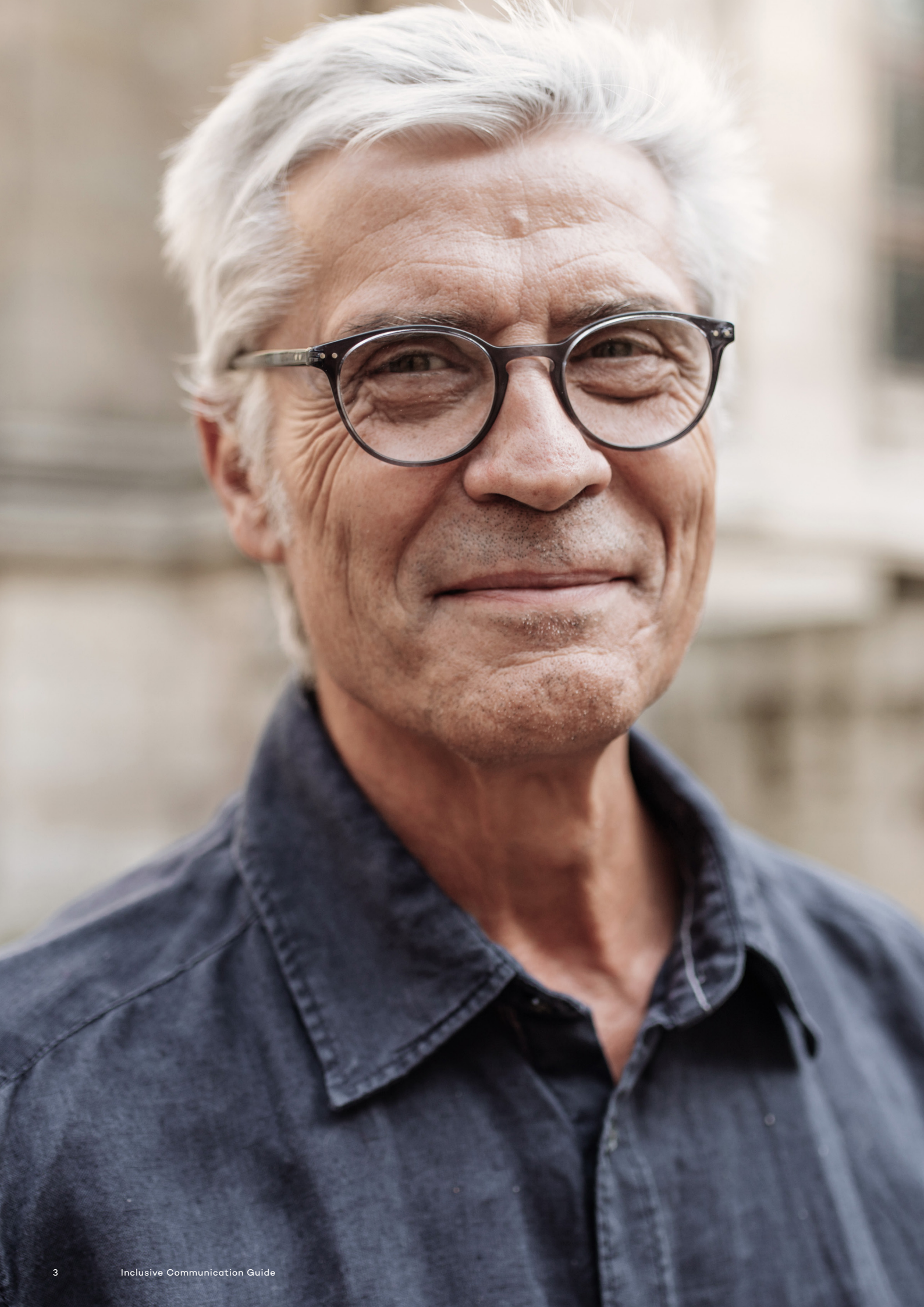


Inclusive Communication Guide



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Checklist for inclusive communication

This checklist is intended to be a support document for all employees at AFRY. It covers written and visual communication as well as physical and virtual meetings, and can be used as a guide, a tool for self-reflection or just as a reminder before you press send. It will take you through the key principles of inclusive communication, with the purpose of ensuring we make conscious choices and consider inclusion, diversity and accessibility aspects when we communicate.

Different types of communication

We communicate in everything we do: when we send a quick email to a colleague, when we run presentations in meetings and when we chat by the coffee machine. Inclusive communication is about how we write and speak, how we work with images and videos, and how we act in our physical and virtual environments. This checklist covers three areas:

- Written communication
- Visual communication
- Verbal and physical communication

How do I start?

When we communicate, our own experiences and our perception of the world will affect our choices. In images we tend to use people that look like us, and our words often reflect our own experiences and worldview. To be truly inclusive you need to reflect on your own background, privileges, and biases. Are you a part of the existing norm? Are you privileged just by being you? It's about making a conscious choice to consider people who are not like you in your communication, with the purpose of representing and including more perspectives.

Something that is important to remember is that we can't be expected to know everything as individuals. But what we can do is to have an open mind, strive for diverse teams and ask people who are not like ourselves how they want to be represented. We want to emphasize that it is fine to not know everything, and to make mistakes. Don't be afraid of 'trial and error' or asking questions if you are insecure.

Written communication

Inclusive writing avoids biases, slang, or expressions that discriminate against groups of people based on race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Inclusive writing also takes visual and cognitive impairment in consideration by thinking about readability and plain language. Using an inclusive language allows you to resonate with more audiences, and communication that is accessible – and that people can identify with – will be more efficient.

Checklist

- Are you writing about people or communities? Find out how the ones you are writing about prefer to be identified and use their preferences. For example, when writing about the LGBTQI+ community, research what terms are preferred.
- Is it necessary to mention gender? 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 of course something to avoid.)
- Pay attention to your internal jargon. Can it be perceived as excluding to others?
- When sharing examples, choose a diverse set of names and characters in order to reflect the real-world diversity.
- Think plain language: use words that your readers will understand, even if they are not experts on the subject.
- Write important information early in your paragraphs, to make sure the message reaches out to as many people as possible.
- Define acronyms and abbreviations and explain technical or complicated words.
- Divide longer texts into shorter paragraphs for better readability.

Exercise

How do you describe people? When people are portrayed it's common that women are defined by their looks, and that they are asked about family and their personal life, while men are described by their skills and achievements. Go through your own texts and consider how you describe people – could something improve?



Visual communication

Images are powerful – what we see affects our perceptions and generates emotions. When we communicate through visuals it's important to reflect our diverse reality. If we tend to focus on representing only a small group of individuals, it's easy to create a false image of what the world looks like. If we are unaware of common stereotypes and how different compositions, body poses and facial expressions are interpreted, we might reinforce stereotypes. However, if we become conscious of what signals our images and videos send, and work actively with this area, we can achieve a greater sense of belonging and present role models for more people to identify with. 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?

Inclusive visual communication is also about accessibility. You need to make sure your communication is available to everyone, including people with visual or cognitive impairments. Make sure to use existing tools and follow accessibility guidelines for the platform or surrounding in which you are communicating.

Checklist

- Choose images with care and avoid images that reinforce stereotypes.
- Who is represented in your images? Think about aspects like:
 - Gender
 - Skin color
 - Body shape
 - Family constellations
 - Age
 - Abilities/disabilities
- Does your image reinforce stereotypes? 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.
- How are people portrayed in your images – from what angles and in what surroundings? For example, women are often portrayed from above, which makes them look small, while men are more often photographed from below, making them look big and powerful.
- What are people doing in your images? 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.

Exercise

Changing habits and adding more perspectives demands active choices. Think about the visual content you have produced or shared recently. Who is represented, and how? Next time you search for images, perhaps you can search for something else than you usually do, or just spend a bit extra time when making your choice to ensure you avoid common stereotypes.



Verbal and physical communication

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

Checklist

- Always act and speak up if anyone around you is exposed to discrimination.
- Make sure all participants in a meeting or gathering knows that 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.
- Do all 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.
- Think twice before asking colleagues personal questions, such as questions about partners or children.
- 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 of course something to avoid.
- Speak in terms of individuals with different backgrounds, families, and religion. Don't assume that there is a unified we. One person does not represent a whole group of people.
- Try not to judge anyone by their looks or clothing. When recruiting or meeting new colleagues, recognise that talent comes in all shapes, sizes, color, ethnicities, and personalities.
- Welcome different perspectives. Be eager to learn from people who has different experiences than you do.
- In global contexts, remember that all countries have different cultures, holidays, seasons, and time zones. Take this into consideration when communicating.
- Ask your colleagues about their needs before digital meetings. Someone might prefer to ask questions verbally instead of writing them in a chat, and someone might have difficulties taking notes and would prefer to record the meeting.
- Take breaks in longer meetings.

Exercise

Reflect on the culture in your meetings. How was your latest meeting? Do you think that everybody felt included? Did everyone have the same opportunity to participate and speak? Are there routines to ensure that people with certain needs can participate?



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We are 17,000 devoted experts in infrastructure, industry, energy and digitalisation, creating sustainable solutions for generations to come.

Making Future

