

Guidelines for

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Emission and Modifications

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01. INTRODUCTION

The words we use shape the reality around us, reflect our thoughts, and influence behavior.

They can become powerful tools for promoting equity, breaking down stereotypes, and fostering the construction of a fairer and more inclusive society.

Politecnica Building for Humans, with its commitment to sustainability and innovation, recognizes that inclusive language is not merely a linguistic choice, but a social responsibility.

Language plays a central role in cultural and social transformation: it defines relationships, shapes perceptions, and can help overcome cultural or gender barriers. In this context, adopting an inclusive approach to words means actively parti-

icipating in positive change, valuing diversity, and promoting communication that is respectful and accessible to everyone.

For a company like Politecnica, operating in architecture, engineering, and urban planning, inclusive language represents an essential added value. By engaging daily with diverse communities and clients, Politecnica acknowledges that sensitivity to cultural and social differences is crucial to building authentic relationships, designing shared spaces, and promoting collective well-being.

The goal, therefore, is not only to adapt to the ongoing cultural change, but also to lead it, demonstrating that inclusivity is a fundamental pillar of our corporate vision.

02. HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

This document is intended as a set of suggestions for the use of language that is as inclusive as possible and attentive to differences.

It is therefore a contribution — a step toward inclusion — that makes no claim to be definitive. On the contrary, many debates and open questions still remain, which we hope can also be addressed within our company through ongoing dialogue among and with all staff members, partners, employees, and collaborators.

For this reason, these Guidelines should be considered a living document, to be updated whenever there is a need to clarify new doubts or address emerging issues.

The suggested practices and guidelines are meant as a vademecum to be consulted whenever institutional documents or everyday communications are drafted, and in any case whenever the need arises.

It is not possible to list fixed, mechanical solutions, nor to provide an exhaustive set of contexts in which grammatical rules should be applied. Each time, it is necessary to carefully assess the text being produced or revised, and to choose the strategies most appropriate to that specific communicative context.



03. POLITECNICA'S POLICY

Politecnica Building for Humans is committed to promoting inclusion, equity, and the appreciation of diversity as fundamental principles of its corporate strategy. These values are embedded in every aspect of corporate governance and guide operational decisions, fostering a work environment in which every individual can feel valued and respected.

Adherence to the UNI/PdR 125:2022 standard, which provides guidelines for managing gender equality through key performance indicators, demonstrates Politecnica's commitment to adopting a structured and measurable approach to inclusion. In parallel, the company takes part in

initiatives such as Fondazione Libellula, which is dedicated to preventing gender-based discrimination and promoting an inclusive corporate culture.

A central element of this policy is the integration of fair and respectful language in all internal and external communications. This approach not only strengthens the company's identity, but also helps raise awareness among employees and partners about the importance of inclusive communication, recognizing the transformative potential of words in building authentic relationships and driving cultural change.





04. THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

Words are not neutral: they convey meanings and values that can either reinforce or challenge stereotypes deeply rooted in society.

Through language, we define reality, shape relationships, and convey messages that influence people's behavior and perceptions. The conscious use of words, therefore, is not merely a communicative act, but an expression of social responsibility.

Adopting gender-neutral or inclusive language helps break down barriers and recognize and respect all identities. This approach avoids discriminatory or limiting expressions and fosters dialogue that values diversity, contributing to the creation of a more equitable and welcoming corporate culture.

For a company like Politecnica, neutral language represents a tangible advantage in corporate communication: it improves message clarity, strengthens values of inclusivity and sustainability, and supports the development of authentic relationships with clients, partners, and communities. Linguistic awareness is, in fact, an essential element in reinforcing corporate values and promoting an environment in which everyone feels represented and respected.

05. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

It is often argued that the real priorities for achieving gender equity lie elsewhere than in language, and that increasing the number of women in leadership positions in Italy should be considered more important than the grammatical gender used to refer to them.

This does not, however, diminish the fact that the invisibility of women in the Italian language is a reality, nor that the struggle on the linguistic front reinforces the social one. Gender-inclusive language thus acknowledges the progress made and the importance of women in society, in professional roles, and in institutional positions; at the same time, it prompts reflection on the rights that are still denied to women and on the path that remains to be taken.

Once the assumption that Italian grammar itself imposes limits on inclusivity has been overcome, and it is recognized that language is not inherently sexist but that asymmetry arises from the way it is used, it becomes evident—regrettably—that women themselves often ask to be referred to in the masculine form, out of concern that the feminine might diminish their professional standing.

Attributing greater importance and authority to the masculine grammatical gender implies accepting that women's access to positions of power, when acknowledged, must be accompanied by conformity to a male model. Defining oneself using the feminine form and making one's presence visible as a woman in prestigious roles is instead an act of identity affirmation and empowerment.

It is also true that the lack of specific guidance and uncertainty about the correct forms of feminine professional titles often lead people to use the masculine grammatical gender when referring to women. Giving names to realities that already

exist in everyday life means enriching a society's linguistic heritage. This does not entail distorting the Italian language or undermining its grammatical system, but rather applying its rules correctly and in accordance with established norms, free from gender bias.

The asymmetry currently present in Italian is not due to any linguistic or grammatical deficiency inherent in the system, but rather has its roots in cultural stereotypes and gender discrimination. The forces that drive linguistic change are varied — including social and cultural factors — but they operate while respecting the internal structure of the language.

The Guidelines for broad and gender-inclusive language move in this direction: by respecting grammatical rules, they recognize that linguistic asymmetry lies in usage rather than in form. Adapting to inclusive language use does not conflict with the rules of Italian, but rather with historically entrenched cultural stereotypes.



Our profession in the Feminine: the most common objections

The technical professions sector, historically dominated by men, is slowly evolving with the entry of new generations, which see a growing number of women graduates in STEM fields. However, some specializations — such as structural and systems engineering — still show low female representation. Added to this are pay inequalities, as highlighted by Inarcassa data, which reveal a wage gap that remains alarmingly wide.

Despite women's increasing access to professions traditionally dominated by men, language often perpetuates the idea of a world in which women are absent from prestigious roles or considered less suited to hold them. Professions such as *ingegnera* (female engineer) and *architetta* (female architect), when used in the feminine form, encounter resistance rooted more in stereotypes than in any real linguistic difficulty.

“It sounds bad”

The most common objection concerns the alleged cacophony of feminine professional titles such as *ingegnera* or *architetta*. This resistance has no solid linguistic basis; it stems instead from their limited use so far. It is no coincidence that terms referring to prestigious roles are perceived as “strange,” while words such as *segretaria* (secretary) or *operaia* (factory worker) have long been accepted in Italian. The issue, therefore, is not language itself, but the cultural perception of women's roles.

“If you want to be called Ingegnera, then you’ll have to call me Geometro”

Many controversies arise from a lack of knowledge of grammatical rules. Italian dictionaries clarify that *geometra* is a noun of common gender (used for both masculine and feminine), whereas *ingegnera*, although still rarely used, is the correct feminine form of *ingegnere*. Adopting the feminine does not mean distorting the Italian language, but simply respecting its rules and overcoming

deep-rooted cultural prejudices. Let's use it — and hope that before long it will no longer be considered “rare”!

“What matters is the profession, not the gender of the person who holds it”

This apparently neutral belief clashes with how the Italian language actually works. The neuter gender, which existed in Latin, was lost in the evolution of Italian, leaving only masculine and feminine. Referring to professions in the masculine while considering them neutral is incorrect both grammatically and culturally, as it symbolically excludes the feminine gender. Often, it is women themselves who ask to be referred to in the masculine, fearing that the feminine might diminish their professional prestige.

Defining oneself using the feminine form not only respects Italian grammar, but is also an act of visibility and self-affirmation. It is a way to reaffirm professional identity and challenge the cultural prejudices that still limit the full representation of women in prestigious roles. Empowerment — also through language — is a powerful tool for promoting cultural change and building a more equitable society.



06. I AM WHAT I WRITE: EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES

Politecnica promotes the adoption of techniques that make inclusive language accessible and applicable across all types of communication. These practical solutions help overcome language-related barriers, ensuring messages that are clear, respectful, and inclusive for every audience.

Among the main techniques adopted are:

Gender doubling: an effective approach to ensure representation of all genders, as in the expression “le professioniste e i professionisti” (“female and male professionals”). This technique is particularly useful in formal contexts, where precision and inclusivity are essential.

Neutral forms: expressions such as “le figure professionali” (“professional roles”) or “il personale” (“staff”) avoid explicit references to gender while keeping language clear and accessible.

Avoiding stereotypes: correctly using feminine and masculine forms of professional titles helps dismantle linguistic bias. For example, using “l’ingegnera” (“female engineer”) or “la giudice” (“female judge”) instead of generic masculine forms.

Avoiding complex symbols: such as the asterisk (*) or the schwa (ə), which may be difficult to interpret for some readers or for those using assistive technologies. Avoiding these symbols ensures that messages remain understandable to a broad and diverse audience. Readability and accessibility are core values underlying these linguistic choices.

An exception applies to legal and institutional documents. In this context, as indicated by the Accademia della Crusca¹, the principle of conciseness prevails and informs the ongoing general revision of legal language. Accordingly, while fully respecting gender-inclusive language, the recommendation is to limit interventions that re-

¹ “Response to the Question on Gender-Equal Language in Judicial Documents Submitted to the Accademia della Crusca by the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Governing Council of the Court of Cassation”
January 2023 – Accademia della Crusca



quire doubling references to both genders and instead opt for neutral or generic forms (for example, using “il personale” rather than “impiegati e impiegate”). For the same reasons, the use of the asterisk in place of morphologically meaningful endings (“Car* amic*, tutt* quell* che riceveranno questo messaggio...”) and of the schwa should be avoided in legal documents.

Likewise, the unmarked masculine may be used when referring in abstract terms to an office or function, regardless of the individual who actually holds the position. Finally, even in legal documents, increasing use should be made of feminine forms of professional titles, applying standard grammatical rules (e.g., ingegnere → ingegnera, il presidente → la presidente).

The adoption of these techniques by Politecnica reflects a commitment to using language that not only respects the grammatical rules of Italian, but also serves as a tool for inclusion—adapted to different contexts, capable of representing every person, and fostering open and respectful dialogue.

07. NOT JUST WORDS: THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGES

Visual communication is just as decisive as textual communication in conveying messages of inclusivity and respect. Politecnica recognizes the fundamental role images play in shaping perceptions and promoting an authentic representation of diversity.

For this reason, the company encourages the selection of images that reflect a plurality of identities, moving beyond stereotypical representations such as “woman = secretary” or “man = manager.” The goal is to portray diverse figures in non-conventional roles—for example, women in leadership positions or men engaged in domestic tasks. This approach helps deconstruct deeply rooted social stereotypes and promotes an inclusive and contemporary image.

Visual language that respects gender differences should ensure balanced representation in terms of numbers, positioning, and roles, avoiding the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. This principle applies not only to different gender identities but also to people with disabilities, of different ages, or from diverse ethnic backgrounds. All of these groups risk being confined to the role of mere exceptions to the norm. One effective approach is to depict individuals who are very different from one another in any context, as they are in society, rather than only in relation to their “exceptional” role.

Colors also play a significant role. Politecnica encourages moving beyond traditional dualisms — such as pink for women and blue for men — and instead opting for a broad and creative color palette that conveys originality and openness. When symbolic representations related to gender are used, stereotypical associations should be avoided — for example, lipstick or high-heeled shoes to signify the feminine gender, or a tie to signify the masculine. It is also advisable to avoid

reinforcing dominant aesthetic ideals and to favor images in which subjects display diverse body types and features, so as not to spread homogenized and idealized images of women and men.

The conscious use of images and colors is not merely an aesthetic choice, but a clear statement of equity and respect. In this way, Politecnica demonstrates its commitment to creating visual communication that is consistent with its corporate values, capable of inspiring positive change and including every person in the visual narrative of its mission.



08. PRACTICAL EXAMPLES: TO DO / NOT TO DO

The use of inclusive language requires care and awareness, especially to avoid stereotypes in professional titles, forms, and everyday communication.

Below is a practical table with examples of correct and incorrect uses of gendered language:

To Avoid	To Prefer
La Rossi	Director Rossi
A female engineer	The engineer
The president	The president
Italians	The Italian people
Professionals	Professional figures
Dear colleagues	Dear colleagues
A female manager	The manager
Workers	The workers
Children	Girls and boys
Users can participate	Interested parties are welcome to participate

Practical Tips

- **Grammatical Gender Agreement:** when referring to a person of the feminine gender, Italian grammar requires the use of the feminine form. According to the same rules, all other inflected parts of speech must also agree in gender. Feminine agreement should be applied consistently throughout the entire document, including the body text, headings, and signature (e.g. “la dottoressa Rossi, ministra”).
- **Explicit Gender Reference:** to make the feminine gender visible when referring to a mixed group of people, it is possible to adopt the strategy of gender doubling, highlighting both genders through the repetition of terms in both the feminine and masculine forms (e.g. “l’architetto Giovanni Rossi e l’architetta Sara Bianchi” instead of “gli architetti Giovanni Rossi e Sara Bianchi”). Alternatively, gender-neutral terms can be used—such as nouns or expressions that refer to all genders (e.g. “il personale dipendente” instead of “i dipendenti”).
- **Professional Titles:** always use the correct feminine and masculine forms (e.g. “l’architetta”, “l’avvocata”), avoiding the use of the generic masculine.
- **Forms and Templates:** prefer neutral expressions such as “chi partecipa” (“those who take part”) or “le figure professionali” (“professional roles”) instead of “i partecipanti” or “i professionisti”.
- **Everyday Communication:** include both genders (e.g. “Cari colleghi e care colleghe” – “Dear colleagues, female and male”) or use inclusive forms (e.g. “benvenutə a tutti” – “welcome to everyone”).

These guidelines help avoid sexist or stereotypical expressions, fostering fair and respectful communication. By adopting these good practices, Politecnica reaffirms its commitment to language that values diversity and promotes inclusion.

09. GENDER-INCLUSIVE VOCABULARY

A careful and conscious use of language recognizes all identities, emphasizing the importance of correctly using feminine and masculine forms where appropriate. This approach helps build inclusive dialogue that respects differences and avoids stereotypes.

Below is a glossary with examples of commonly used terms expressed in an inclusive way:

Masculine	Feminine (Italian)
Ingegnere	Ingegnera
Presidente	Presidente*
Architetto	Architetta
Direttore Generale	Direttrice Generale
Magistrato	Magistrata
Sindaco	Sindaca
Responsabile	Responsabile
Avvocato	Avvocata
Consulente	Consulente

Using correctly inflected forms is essential to overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers that perpetuate the exclusive use of the masculine. Adopting gender-respectful language values the contribution of every individual, fostering a sense of belonging and representation.

Through the adoption of an inclusive vocabulary, Politecnica demonstrates that language can be a tool for equality—capable of supporting authentic and respectful communication across all corporate contexts.

* "Presidente" è invariabile e specificabile aggiungendo l'articolo appropriato, ad esempio "la Presidente".

10. A LITTLE HELP...

Below are some suggested questions to ask yourself when drafting text that aims to be broad and inclusive.

- Does the text contain gender-marked expressions that could be replaced with non-gendered forms?
- Does the text use the masculine plural to refer to a collective group?
- Does the text rely on gender-based professional or social stereotypes?
- Does the text respect gender agreement for all genders?
- Does the text present unjustified gender asymmetries?

FURTHER READING

For those who wish to learn more and further explore the topic of inclusive language and gender equality, the following resources are recommended:

“UNI Guidelines for Gender Equality in Language” (UNI, 2024). A document that provides practical and concrete guidance for adopting neutral and inclusive language, applicable across various professional and corporate contexts.

“Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language” (CNR, 2024).

“Gender Neutrality in the Language Used by the European Parliament” (2018). An important reference for understanding the linguistic policies adopted by the European Parliament to promote gender equality.

Training materials by Variazioni srl: “Inclusive Language: Your Words Create the World” (Politecnica, 2024). A training session that explores the importance of inclusive language, offering practical tools for applying it in corporate settings.

“Vademecum on Gendered Language” – University of Milan (2021). A useful compendium providing concrete examples and guidelines for the use of non-sexist language in academic and professional communication.

“Guidelines for Gender-Respectful Administrative Language” – Metropolitan City of Milan (2022). A document offering a practical approach to adopting inclusive language in public administration.

“Response to the Question on Gender-Equal Language in Judicial Documents Submitted to the Accademia della Crusca by the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Governing Council of the Court of Cassation” – Accademia della Crusca (2023).

These resources provide an in-depth overview of inclusive language practices and are essential for anyone wishing to integrate these principles thoughtfully and consistently into their communications.

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