# Inclusive Language in French (and other languages): What is actually included?

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International Research Networking Project

*Language and Gender: Academic Research and Practical Implementation*

Conference & Workshop 1 "Language and Gender: Achieving Conceptual Clarity"

# Contents

- Gender and Nonsexist / inclusive language: definitions

- Data: a multilingual database

- French: 55 years of debate – or 6 years?

- Perspectives on inclusion

# Gender and Nonsexist / inclusive language: definitions

- Gender: ambigous
  - grammatical genders vs gendered forms vs gender identities

  - grammatical genders: visible in satellite (or anaphoric) elements
    - in French: masculine vs feminine gender (*la ville*, *le village*)
      (other configurations in other languages: neuter gender, animate vs inanimate, etc.)
  - gendered forms: depend on context
    - ex. *bibliothécaire*
      - sometimes feminine or masculine: *la/une bibliothécaire compétente* vs. *le/un bibliothécaire compétent*
      - sometimes neutralised: *les/des bibliothécaires spécialistes*
  - gender identity: chosen by individuals, stable or not, binary or not
    - but also enacted and interpreted by others
    - vs. sex (attributed at birth)

# Guides for non-sexist / inclusive language: definition

- By a **guide for non-sexist / inclusive language**, I mean

  - a published document,
  - which (exclusively or in addition to other subjects) is about the representation of persons in (written) language,
  - which contains a (more or less strong) call for action, namely that of gender balance in language use
  - which describes the means to be used: typically a list of methods or resources that are recommended, prescribed or to be avoided.

  - Elmiger 2021: 17, 2022a, 2022b

RÉDACTION INCLUSIVE ET ÉPICÈNE à l'UNIGE

SERVICE ÉGALITÉ & DIVERSITÉ    UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

# Collection

- State (January 2024):
  - 2843 guides
  - more than 40 languages,
  - 1975-2023

- detailled analysis (d/f/e):
Aline Siegenthaler

**Sammlung** / collection
**Leitfäden für geschlechtergerechte / inklusive Sprache**
Guides de langue non sexiste / inclusive
Guidelines for non-sexist / inclusive language
S. 2-8

Sammlung / **Collection**
Leitfäden für geschlechtergerechte / inklusive Sprache
**Guides de langue non sexiste / inclusive**
Guidelines for non-sexist / inclusive language
p. 9-15

Sammlung / **Collection**
Leitfäden für geschlechtergerechte / inklusive Sprache
Guides de langue non sexiste / inclusive
**Guidelines for non-sexist / inclusive language**
p. 16-22

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# Guidelines for non-sexist / inclusive language

- NB: certain texts refer to more than one language

| Romance languages | Germanic languages | Slavic languages | Indo-European languages | Other languages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asturian (1) | Afrikaans (1) | Bosnian (1) | Breton (2) | Arab (4) |
| Catalan (100) | Danish (2) | Bulgarian (2) | Greek (2) | Basque (17) |
| French (379) | English (351) | Croatian (3) | Irish Gaelic (2) | Chinese (1) |
| Galician (26) | Dutch (10) | Czech (10) | Latvian (2) | Estonian (2) |
| Gallo (1) | German (1123) | Polish (10) | Lithuanian (2) | Finnish (2) |
| Italian (105) | Norwegian (1) | Russian (1) | | Hungarian (2) |
| Portuguese (62) | Swedish (2) | Serbian (1) | | Maltese (2) |
| Rhaeto-Romance (8) | | Slovak (3) | | Turkish (3) |
| Romanian (3) | | Slovene (2) | | various African |
| Spanish (694) | | | | languages (8) |
| Valencian (46) | | | | |

What representativeness?

# Guides: typical elements

- Introduction: *why?* (rationale)
  - Importance of language for equality (and mental representation)
  - legal basis
- Central part: *how?* (examples)
- Other elements
  - Contextualisation (historical, institutional, etc.)
  - Argumentation aids
  - Hints on the use of graphic elements / of other criteria
  - Word lists, model texts, contexts
  - Bibliographical references, etc.

| Expresión sexista ❌ | Alternativa incluyente ✅ |
| --- | --- |
| Los empleados… | Los empleados y las empleadas… |
| Los trabajadores… | Las trabajadoras y los trabajadores… |

# Differences

- Media
  - Paper (brochures, books, loose sheets, posters, etc.)
  - Electronic files (PDF, text processing)
  - Internet pages (HTML sites, blogs, etc.)
  - sometimes several versions
    - e.g. print version & screen document
- Languages
  - one, two or more languages

# GUÍA DE BOLSILLO
## PARA LA GESTIÓN DE GÉNERO
# EN ORGANIZACIONES
# DE PESCA ARTESANAL

MARVIVA

# Contenido

# Nonsexist / inclusive, … language

- *nonsexist*, *nichtsexistisch*, *geschlechtergerecht*, *gendergerecht*, *-inklusiv*, *-sensibel*, etc.: in relation to a binary distinction (women/men) or other genders / gender identities

- inclusive: all genders and/or groups of people who differ from each other in terms of other characteristics

# Designation of the texts/genre: French

| Genre | Object | Attribute |
|---|---|---|
| guide | langue | non sexiste, désexisé·e |
| règles, règlement | rédaction | inclusif/inclusive |
| recommandations | écriture | épicène |
| propositions | formulation | non genré·e, ... de genre |
| orientations | usage | égalitaire |
| manuel | communication | féminin·e, féminisé·e |
| directives, alternatives, solutions, | grammaire | non discriminatoire |
| vademecum, suggestions, instructions, | approche | sans stéréotypes |
| indications, décalogue, charte, avis, | traitement | neutre, neutralisé·e, |
| notification, rapport, décision, bonnes | etc. | sensible (aux genres), |
| pratiques, conseils, critères, fil rouge, etc. | | sensitif/sensitive, approprié·e, |
| | | respectueux/respectueuse, etc. |

# Designation of the texts/genre: English

| Genre | Object | Attribute |
|---|---|---|
| guideline(s) (and resources) | language, use (of language) | inclusive |
| guide, style guide, study guide manual, handbook, framework policy (statement), charter | communication, communicator, writing terms | gender, gender- inclusive/fair/ neutral/sensitive/mainstreamed/ related |
| recommendations, suggestions, principles | inclusion, diversity drafting, content(s), events | non-sexist, non-discriminatory bias-free, reducing bias |
| guidance, how-to, tip(s), fact sheet, toolkit, tip sheet, resources, practices, handout, dictionary | website, worship | equitable, diversity-sensitive |

# A wide range of designations

- different perspectives on language, communication and people that are written or talked about

- ex.
  - …de genre
  - inclusif/inclusive
  - epicène
  - neutre

  - gender of words/forms or gender of people?
  - What is actually included?
  - same form (*bibliothécaire*) or one form for all (*personne*)?
  - neutralisation or creation of a neuter gender – or relating to non-binary people?

# A very condensed view on the discussion

- late 1970s until pre 2017
  - wide discussion in the peripheral northern francophony
  - several designations: *épicène, non sexiste/désexisé, féminin·e/féminisation, …*
  - lexical aspects, but also the use (and avoidance) of certain forms (esp. generically intended masculine forms)

- post 2015/2017
  - 2015: a new French guide: Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes (2015): *Guide pratique pour une communication publique sans stéréotype de sexe*
  - 2016: Haddad (dir.) (2016): *Manuel d'écriture inclusive*
  - 2017: a sudden interest in the media and in the general public
    - with a new term: *écriture inclusive*
    - with new forms: *agriculteur.rice.s*

# Different designations (example: French)

## 1985-2019

## 2020-2023



Legend:
- féminisation, féminin·e
- (non) sexiste, désexisé·e
- épicène
- inclusif/inclusive
- autres (égalitaire, neutre, non discriminatoire, …)
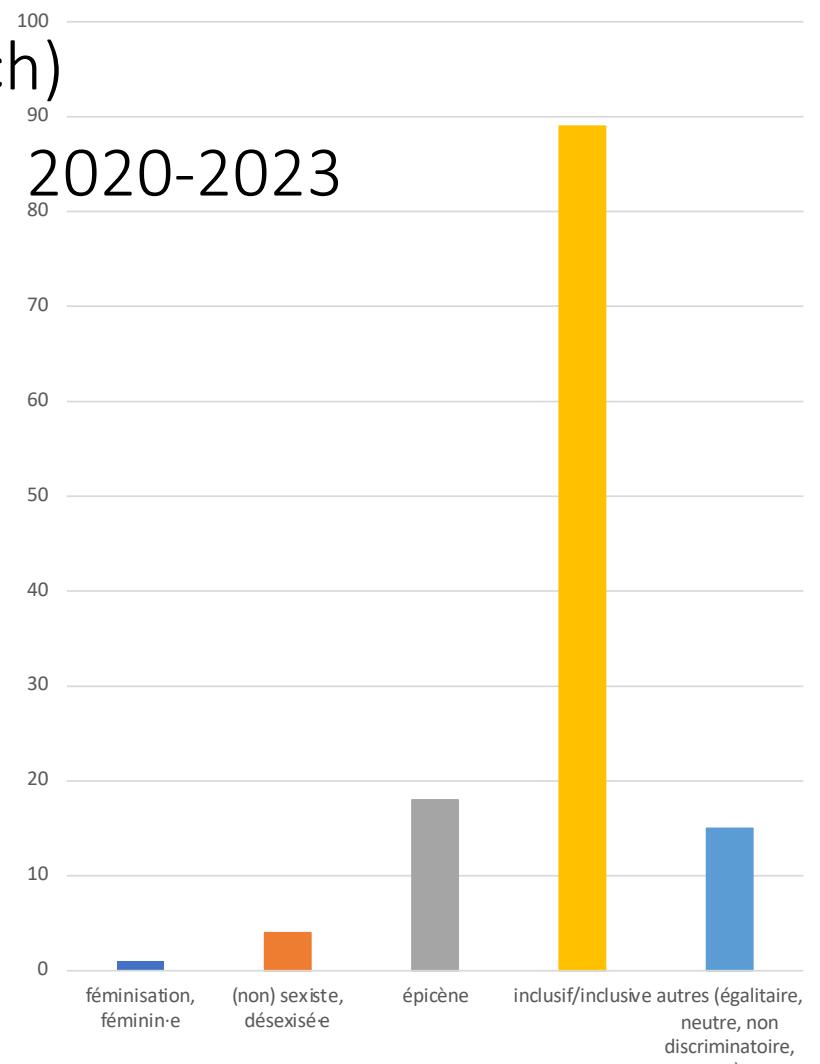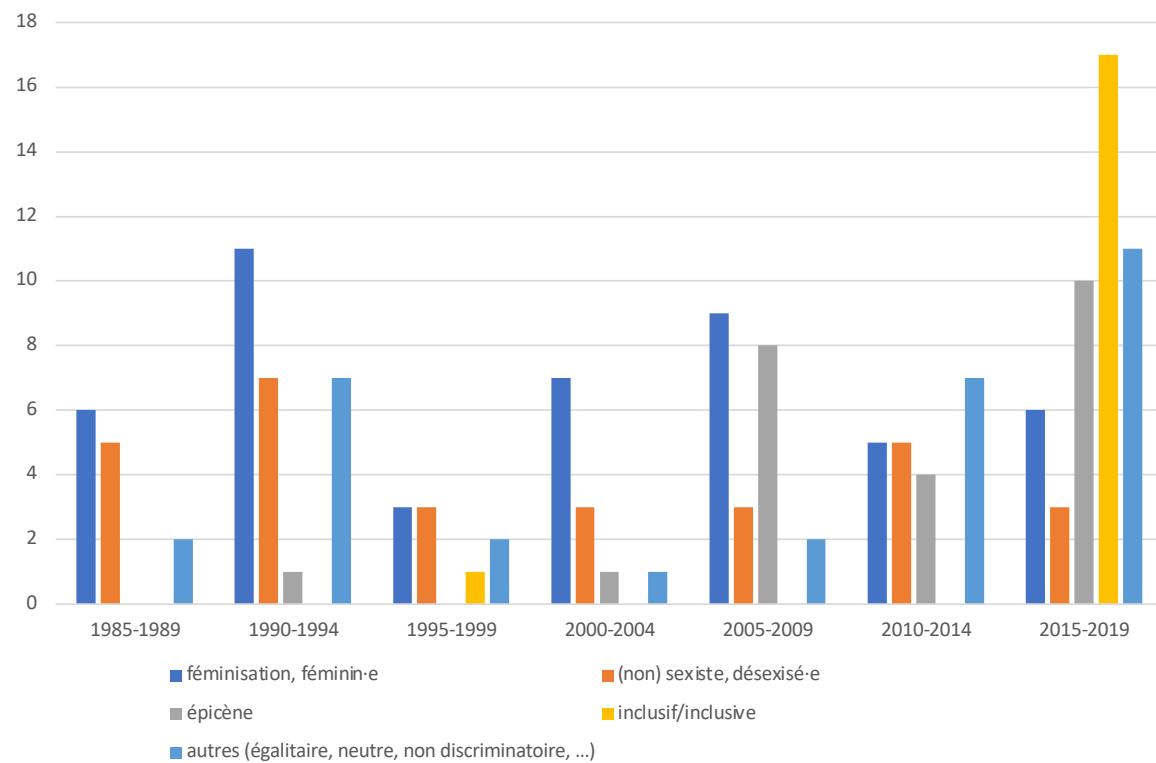
# Multiple versions

- below: Haute École spécialisée de Suisse occidentale HES-SO (2014)
- right: Haute École spécialisée de Suisse occidentale HES-SO (2019)
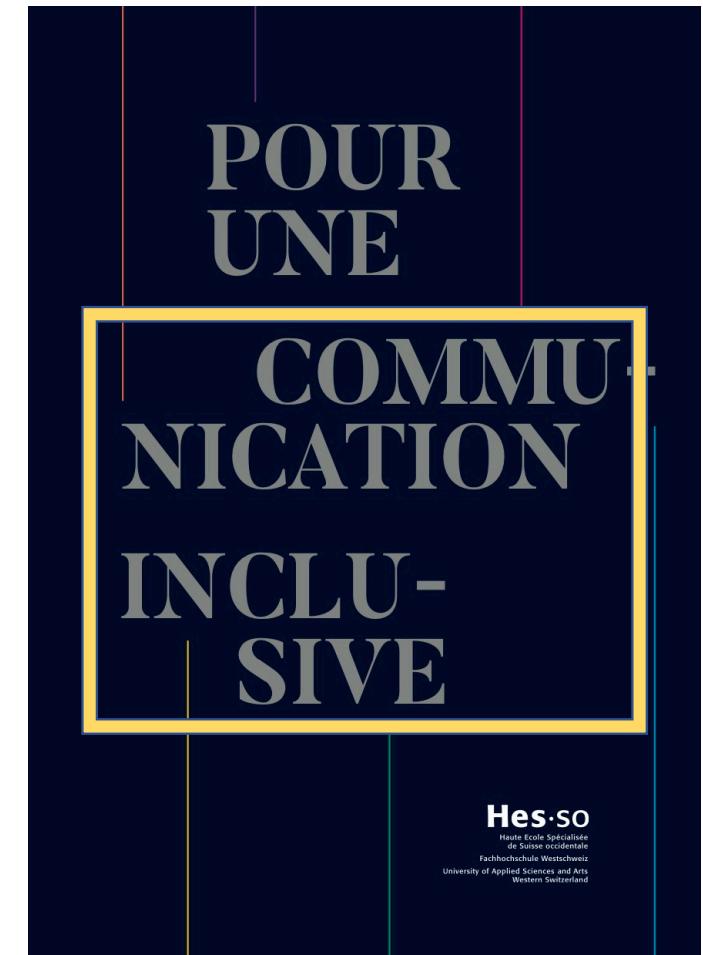
# What is included in inclusive language?

- Inclusion is a matter of words – but also a goal in other domains.

- My starting point:
  - By a guide for non-sexist / inclusive language, I mean
    - a published document,
    - which (exclusively or in addition to other subjects) is about the representation of persons in (written) language […]

- Often, other types of inclusion are being treated in the same (or comparable) documents.

# Inclusive: gender

**INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION**

Gender-Sensitive, Inclusive and Accessible Language

**CIPE** CENTER FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

**JULY 2022** | CIPE's Inclusive Communication document serves as a desk review consolidating current standards and practices as defined by multilateral international and humanitarian organizations for more inclusive English-language communication as of the date of its publication. CIPE published the desk review for use by staff and partners as part of its commitment to the value of inclusion. This document does not constitute CIPE policy on the topics presented, and any questions regarding those policies should be directed to CIPE's Human Resources department at hr@cipe.org.

Center for International Private Enterprise CIPE (2022): *Inclusive Communication. Gender-Sensitive, Inclusive and Accessible Language.* Amnesty Suisse: 36 p.

## Table of Contents

# What is included?

- In the Database:
  - gendered forms
  - gender (identity)
  - sexual orientation
  - (ethnical or other) origin
  - religion / politics
  - health, disabilities, etc.
  - physical appearance
  - age
  - socioeconomic status
  - family situation

  - images
  - vocabulary
  - comprehensible language

Vulnerabilidad
económica

| | Personas privadas de su libertad | Personas en centros de reclusión.<br>Personas internas<br>Personas en reclusión |
|---|---|---|
| Personas privadas de la libertad | | |
| | Personas víctimas de trata con fines de explotación | Personas víctimas de explotación sexual |
| Personas víctimas de trata y explotación sexual comercial | | |
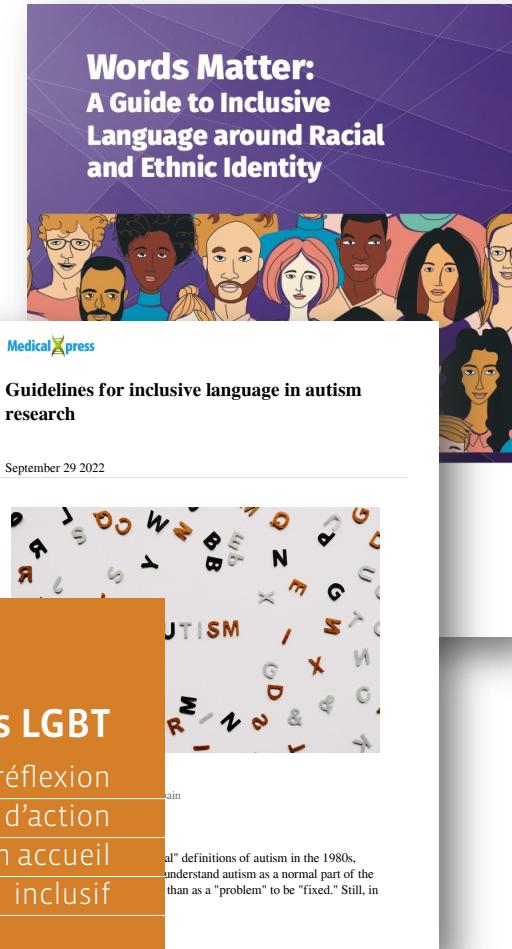
# What is included?

**Personas:**

- De piel morena
- De estatura baja
- Con distinta lengua, idioma o forma de hablar
- Indígenas
- Extranjeras
- Lesbianas
- Por venir de algún estado de la República (no ser de la Ciudad de México)
- Mujeres

10

Ciudad de México (2016): *Manual Lenguaje incluyente y no discrimatorio en la actuación de la administración pública de la Ciudad de México*. Gobierno de la Ciudad de México; Consejo para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación de la Ciudad de México COPRED: 46 p.

- Hombres
- Niñas o niños
- Jóvenes
- Gays
- Adultas mayores
- Trabajadoras del hogar
- Con discapacidad
- Con apariencia y modo de vestir diferente
- Bisexuales
- Pobres
- Por su religión o por no tenerla
- Judías
- De preferencia u orientación sexual distinta a la heterosexual
- Transgéneros
- De nivel educativo bajo (sólo la primaria)
- Con opiniones o preferencias políticas diferentes a las de la mayoría
- Con tatuajes o perforaciones corporales
- Con sobrepeso
- Intersexuales
- Embarazadas
- Que viven en unión libre o en concubinato
- Divorciadas
- Transexuales
- Solteras
- Con algún problema de salud
- Con antecedentes penales, acusadas o que estuvieron en la cárcel
- Afrodescendientes (personas de raza negra)
- Con malformaciones genéticas
- Travestis
- Integrantes de la población callejera
- Trabajadoras sexuales
- Con VIH/SIDA

11

# What is included?
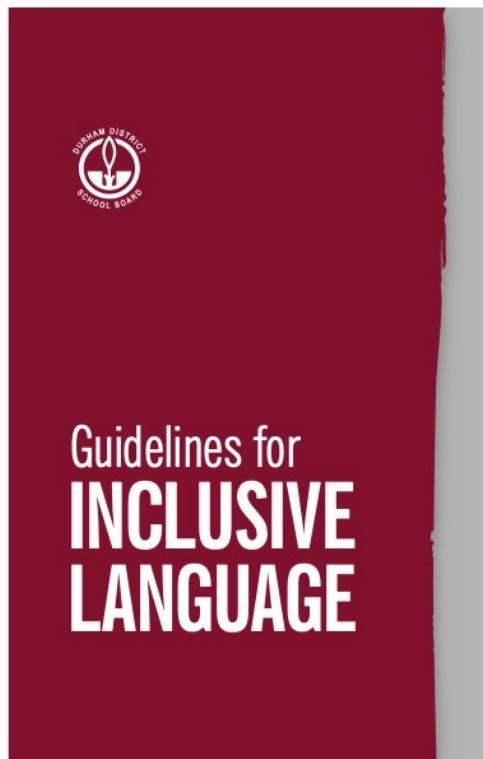


Durham District School Board (2011):
*Guidelines for Inclusive Language*: 20 p.

## Table of
## CONTENTS

## RACIAL, ETHNO-CULTURAL, FAITH, LANGUAGE GROUPS

Racial, Ethno-Cultural, Faith, Language groups will have diverse ways of naming and referring to themselves. It is important that we respect a group's or an individual's preference about how they wish to be addressed. People from non-dominant groups may prefer to be known by their country of origin or by their language group. For example,

### LANGUAGE GROUPS

*"The proportion of people reporting English or French as a mother tongue is declining."* (Census Canada, 2006)

| PREFERRED TERMS | TERMS TO AVOID |
|---|---|
| Use the name of the language: A person who speaks Arabic... | Arabic speaking, French speaking |

### TONE OF VOICE AND NON-VERBAL INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Regardless of the words we choose, our non-verbal communication and tone of voice express emotions, opinions, and attitudes. We all need to ensure that we think about how we speak to each other and that our professional tone is one of respect and curiosity, particularly when we are working within a diverse workplace. It is important to avoid patronizing, condescending, sarcastic, and other inflections that might be misunderstood as being disrespectful.

### PRONUNCIATION OF NAMES

When respectfully communicating verbally with people of diverse backgrounds, learn the correct pronunciation of names, and ask for appropriate pronunciation prior to introducing individuals during meetings. Avoid derogatory comments or surprised reactions to diverse names. Do not shorten or Anglicize names.

# What is included?

All kinds of discriminated/often forgotten/less considered groups.



**ABLEIZM**

**ABLEISMUS**

**ROMOFOBIA**

**ISLAMOFOBIA**

**DIVERSITÄTSSENSIBLE/ DISKRIMINIERUNGSFREIE SPRACHE**

Sprache, die allen Menschen und gesellschaft-lichen Gruppen Respekt entgegenbringt, indem sie Stereotype und Bezeichnungen vermeidet, die Ablehnung und Vorurteile befördern können. Diversitätssensible Sprache zeichnet sich auch dadurch aus, dass sie Vielfalt widerspiegelt. Sie verwendet z. B. sowohl weibliche als auch männliche Formen oder solche, die eine eindeutige geschlechtliche Zuweisung nicht voraussetzen: Schüle-rinnen und Schüler, Pol*innen, Lehrer_innen).

**ISLAMOFOBIA**

Lęk i niechęć wobec islamu, muzułmanów i muzułmanek (oraz osób o domniemanej przynależności do grupy muzułmanów/ek), często oparty na uprzedzeniach. Może prowadzić do dyskryminacji oraz aktów agresji (np. dyskryminacji przy wynajmie mieszkania i staraniu się o zatrudnienie, protestów przeciwko budowie meczetu i ataków na meczety).

**ISLAMOPHOBIE ISLAMFEINDLICHKEIT MUSLIMFEINDLICHKEIT**

Angst vor und Abneigung gegenüber dem Islam sowie (vermeintlichen) Musliminnen und Musli-men. Beruht häufig auf Vorurteilen gegenüber Angehörigen dieser Gruppe. Kann zu Diskrimi-nierung und aggressivem Verhalten führen (z. B. Benachteiligung bei der Suche nach Wohnungen und Arbeitsplätzen, Angriffe auf dieser Gruppe zugerechnete Menschen, Anschläge auf Moscheen, Protest gegen Moscheebauten). Der Begriff Islamfeindlichkeit betont, dass es sich nicht um eine Angststörung („Phobie"), sondern um aktiven Hass handelt. Der Begriff Muslim-feindlichkeit betont, dass sich der Hass nicht nur gegen die Religion, sondern gegen konkrete Menschen richtet.

# What is included?



- the core (in my perspective)
  - **linguistically gendered word forms** (avoiding generically used masculine forms):
    - (personal) nouns / pronouns, etc. ((man/actor, actress))
- outside the core
  - **groups of people** that were previously not represented or underrepresentated
    - age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
  - **communication**
    - verbal and non-verbal communication (images, illustrations, etc.)
    - accessible communication (easy to understand, assisted writing/reading, etc.)
    - respectful, non-violent communication
    - interaction, decision making, etc.
    - communication in certain contexts: e. g. teaching
  - **other contexts where language and communications may matter**
    - school management
    - events
    - recruitment
    - …
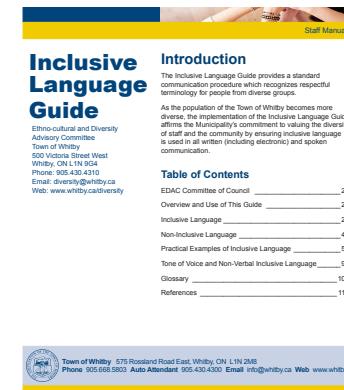
# contexts

| schools |
|---|
| events |
| recruiting |
| ... |

## communication

| accessible communication |
|---|
| interactions |
| textual, visual communication |
| ... |

### groups of peope

| gender identity | sexual orienta-tion | health / disability | origin | ... |
|---|---|---|---|---|

#### gendered word forms

| nouns (man/woman, actor/actress) | pronouns, determiners, etc. | adjectives | ... |
|---|---|---|---|

# What is included?

groups of people

gendered forms   etc.   communication

contexts
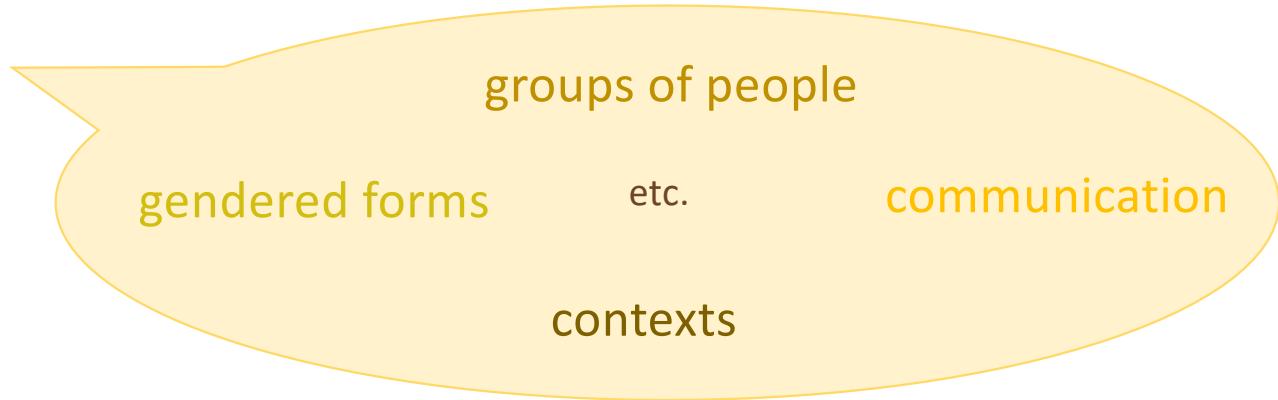
- … but not necessarily with the label «inclusion» / *inclusive/inclusif* / …

- In French, one can observe more conceptual unity
… but conceptual clarity seems still far away.
  - You can't trust the label: you (still) have to look inside to know
  - In guidelines, but also in specialised litterature

# Discussion

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chronique: *Les genres réécrits*: https://www.revue-glad.org/405

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