

GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AT THE MDC

Using gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes. Given the key role of language in shaping cultural and social attitudes, using gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias.

Everyone at the MDC is encouraged to address all genders equally and to make them visible linguistically as a matter of principle in our official documents, job adverts, intranet texts, emails, forms, etc., and also in the spoken language. Standards that apply to German language [have been introduced already 2019](#) and have been applied since then to all official document, press statements, letter, emails, forms, etc.

Although gendered language is less of an issue in English, we still should be aware of it also in this language. English has very few gender markers: **the pronouns and possessives** (*he, she, her* and *his*); and **some nouns and forms of address**. Most English nouns do not have grammatical gender forms (*teacher, scientist*), whereas a few nouns are specifically masculine or feminine (*actor/actress, waiter/waitress*). Some nouns that once ended in *-man* now have neutral equivalents that are used to include both genders (*police officer* for *policeman/policewoman*, *spokesperson* for *spokesman*, *chair/chairperson* for *chairman*).

A challenge for gender-inclusive communication in English is the use of the masculine form by default. For example, “*Every participant must submit **his** credentials to protocol.*”

Best practice/strategies to be more gender-inclusive, can be found at the [United Nations site](#). We encourage everyone to read it and also use the training materials provided there.

Another handout proposing a number of [useful tips and different strategies for gender inclusive language is provided by the University of North Carolina Writing Center](#).

Please see also the [guidelines for gender-neutral language in the European Parliament](#).

Gender-neutral language doesn't have to be cumbersome – it can also sound pretty elegant, both when you write and read it. Don't be afraid to use your imagination!