



# Guidelines on Diversity and Inclusion



Funded by  
the European Union

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>About the EU Code Week project .....</b>   | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Introduction.....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Importance of inclusive practices.....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Gender .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.1 Gender Inclusive Communication.....   | 5         |
| Gender Sensitive Language: What is it?.....   | 5         |
| When to use gender sensitive language? .....  | 5         |
| 1.2 Diverse and balanced gender representation .....                                  | 8         |
| <b>Promoting inclusivity across generations .....</b>                                 | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Accessible and inclusive learning content and activities.....</b>                  | <b>12</b> |
| 1.3 Respectful language and terminology .....   | 12        |
| 1.4 Inclusive visuals portraying individuals with disabilities.....                   | 13        |
| 1.5 Web Accessibility .....   | 14        |
| 1.6 Inclusive design .....  | 15        |
| <b>Cultural Inclusivity.....</b>  | <b>16</b> |
| Importance of cultural inclusivity with a gendered lens .....                         | 18        |
| <b>Create safe and inclusive spaces: venue accessibility and accommodations .....</b> | <b>19</b> |
| <b>A quick checklist of Do's and Don'ts .....</b>                                     | <b>20</b> |
| <b>References and additional useful resources.....</b>                                | <b>21</b> |

## About the EU Code Week project

With 2030 rapidly approaching and the digital decade target of 20 million ICT professionals in Europe still far out of reach, now is the time to bring together all of Europe's digital skills stakeholders from Youth Education, Civil Society, Digital Industry and Government to implement innovative new approaches to the digital upskilling of young people.

Code4Europe envisions to create a hugely successful, sustainable, and scalable digital education and upskilling initiative that will empower all young Europeans to embrace digital technologies and pursue a highly rewarding career in Digital. We intend to reach this goal by reimagining and growing EU Code Week, giving it a mandate to:

- drive real change in digital education throughout Europe
- a focus on vastly increasing the number of young people who choose digital careers
- an emphasis on engaging the entire digital skills ecosystem in a common mission to close the digital skills gap in Europe by tackling the problem at its source.

Code4Europe will massively scale EU Code Week aiming to impact 25 million young people over the period of 2 years (01/07/2024 – 30/06/2026). We will maintain and build on the grassroots nature of the initiative, embrace and empower the existing Code Week community, and stay fully aligned with its core values. In order to implement our vision, we have created a Consortium of 45 committed and passionate organisations representing all the Digital Education & Skills Stakeholder groups needed to grow EU Code Week to unprecedented levels. Led by Junior Achievement Europe, Code4Europe will unite European Education and Digital Skills Communities within one integrated EU Code Week programme.

## Introduction

The word “inclusion” originates from the Latin “includere”, which means “to enclose” or “to bring in”. Over time this term has evolved to signify the act of embracing and integrating diverse individuals into a community, environment or system. In educational and learning environment **inclusion goes beyond simply allowing entry**; it involves ensuring that every individual feels valued, respected and fully engaged regardless of their background, abilities and characteristics. The concept of inclusion is closely linked to the idea of equity. **Equity** involves providing all individuals with the access and resources they need to succeed, considering the structural factors that benefit certain groups and disadvantage others. Inclusion is not just a principle; it is a foundation for innovation, collaboration, and societal growth. By ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, ability or identity, feels empowered to participate, we create environments that foster creativity, challenge the assumptions and inspire for progress. These guidelines are a step toward making education and digital initiatives a true reflection of the diverse communities they serve.

**Diversity is recognising and embracing the unique characteristics that distinguish each individual within a group or system.** It involves acknowledging, respecting, and valuing the variety of differences that shape us, encompassing identity-forming aspects like ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, race, socio-economic status, disabilities, and age, but also inner characteristics like beliefs or brain functioning. **Diversity cannot be understood as a binary notion of 'you are' or 'you are not'**, but rather as the dynamic intersection of all the different characteristics that make up an individual and that cannot be disentangled (iBox project, [Inclusion and Diversity Charter](#), 2023).

**Diversity** in education refers to the presence of a variety of perspectives, cultures and identities that enrich the learning experience for all participants; when learners from various backgrounds come together, they bring with them unique points of view that challenge assumptions, stimulate critical thinking and encourage problem solving.

In alignment with the EU’s commitment to equal rights and opportunities, these guidelines are inspired by key EU policy documents and initiative aimed at making education accessible to all, including:

- [The European Pillar of Social Rights](#) – first principle – everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and Lifelong learning. The principle emphasises the EU’s commitment to social equity and cohesion, ensuring that everyone is left behind in accessing opportunity for learning.
- [The Digital Education Action Plan \(2021 – 2027\)](#) which sets out the common vision of high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe
- [Council Recommendation on Common values, Inclusive education and European dimension of Teaching \(2018\)](#) - that emphasises the importance of the inclusive education in promoting equity and social cohesion. It aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to quality education and equal opportunity to succeed. This includes combatting discrimination and racism, promoting intercultural competencies and supporting disadvantaged groups.

In addition, other relevant documents such as [Gender Equality Strategy](#), [EU Anti-Racism Action Plan](#), [LGBTIQ Equality Strategy](#) and [the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) have also been considered to provide a comprehensive and in-depth framework for the design of these guidelines.

## Importance of inclusive practices

The development of the educational content is one of the keys areas where inclusion must be prioritised; the way the content is presented, the language used, and the accessibility of the material can significantly impact the learning experience. When creating learning resources, it is important to use inclusive language to avoid stereotypes and represent a wide range of experiences. Visual element should also reflect diversity, ensuring that everyone can see themselves represented in the materials they engage with. Additionally, materials should be accessible to students with disabilities, incorporating features such as alternative text for images, clear typography and easy to navigate formats. In the digital age, ensuring that educational websites are inclusive and accessible is paramount. This means adhering to accessibility standards such as the web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG). Beyond educational contents, event plays a significant role in education, whether they are in-person, hybrid or online.

Creating inclusive educational materials that are valuable for every individual does not come just with a set of detailed instructions or with one-size-fits-all solution. However, it is possible to develop the necessary competencies to become more aware of the components of diversity and implement inclusivity. Diversity and inclusion are crucial to stimulating new ideas and fostering an innovative, thriving society.

Inclusive practices not only benefit the individual learners but also strengthen communities by promoting empathy, collaboration and mutual respect – it minimises the distance between “us and them”.

These guidelines, developed specifically for the EU Code Week, are designed to ensure that educational content and activities are inclusive and accessible to diverse groups of learners. They address key parameters such as gender, age, culture and accessibility. To support the EU Code Week community, these guidelines offer a clear checklist of Dos and Don’ts, providing practical steps to follow for creating more inclusive, equitable and accessible EU Code Week educational experiences.

## Gender

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines gender as socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relations of and between groups of women and men. Gender norms, roles, and relations differ across societies and cultures and evolve over time. They are oftentimes maintained and reinforced through the values, legislation, education systems, religion, media, and other societal institutions. Individuals or groups who do not conform to established gender norms frequently encounter stigma, discrimination, or social exclusion, all of which can negatively impact their wellbeing. Additionally, gender is hierarchical, often reflecting unequal power relations and creating inequalities intersecting with other social and economic disparities.

In the context of EU Code Week, gender mainstreaming is a vital approach to promoting inclusivity and equality in digital education. This initiative not only encourages participation from diverse groups, including women and non-binary individuals but also seeks to dismantle stereotypes associated with tech roles. By actively integrating gender perspectives into coding and outreach activities, EU Code Week can ensure that all voices are heard and that everyone feels empowered to engage in coding and technology.

Gender mainstreaming within the EU Code Week framework involves designing activities and resources that are accessible and relevant to individuals of all genders. **This includes creating promotional materials that feature diverse role models, developing curricula that address the interests and needs of all participants, and ensuring that events are welcoming and supportive environments for everyone.** By doing so, EU Code Week can foster a culture of inclusivity and collaboration, ultimately enhancing the overall impact of the initiative.

**Moreover, promoting gender-sensitive language and practices in all communications reinforces the commitment to equality and diversity.** By acknowledging the different experiences and barriers faced by individuals based on their gender, EU Code Week can create a more inclusive and supportive community that empowers all participants to thrive in the tech landscape. This holistic approach not only enhances the effectiveness of EU Code Week but also contributes to broader societal goals of equality and social justice in the digital age.

## 1.1 Gender Inclusive Communication

Language significantly influences how we define, perceive, and make sense of the world around us, often unintentionally conveying bias or reinforcing stereotypes. Therefore, it is a powerful tool that, when used thoughtfully, can foster inclusivity and help dismantle discriminatory messages or unconscious biases.

The impact of adopting gender-sensitive language is profound. It not only enhances the visibility of underrepresented groups in technology but also encourages their active participation. For instance, using phrases like "students and mentors" rather than "boys and girls" promotes inclusivity and signals that everyone is welcome to engage in coding activities. Additionally, gender-sensitive language helps to challenge traditional norms and encourages participants to see themselves as integral members of the community.

### [Gender Sensitive Language: What is it?](#)

**"Gender-sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language.** Gender equality in language is attained when women and men – and those who do not conform to the binary gender system – are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect.

There are a number of different ways gender relationships can be expressed with accuracy, such as avoiding the use of language that refers explicitly or implicitly to only one gender and ensuring, through inclusive alternatives, the use of gender-sensitive and inclusive language." (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.)

### [When to use gender sensitive language?](#)

**Using gender sensitive language is essential in all contexts** where inclusivity, accuracy, and respect are important. Activities and events organised during EU Code Week have a universal goal to include and encourage more participation from young people, particularly girls, hence, it is crucial to include gender sensitivity in all forms of communication.

If you want to incorporate gender-sensitive language, you can:

**AVOID**

Using 'his/him' pronouns when not sure about gender:

Examples:

- ✗ A programmer uses his computer.
- ✗ A scientist describes his responsibilities.
- ✗ A teacher takes her lunch break here.
- ✗ A student can ask his questions at the end of the class.

Using 'man' as the neutral term:

- ✗ 'chairman'
- ✗ 'policeman' or 'policewoman'
- ✗ 'spokesman'
- ✗ 'headmaster' or 'headmistress'
- ✗ 'mankind'
- ✗ 'man-made'

Irrelevant information about gender roles  
Using the 'feminine' adjectives to refer to occupations and roles in which women are increasingly participating or opting for.

Example:

- ✗ 'Female scientists' implies that scientists are normally male
- ✗ 'Female entrepreneurship' would inaccurately indicate the presence of masculine and feminine ways of doing business

If you want to incorporate gender-sensitive language, you can:

**USE**

Instead use plural forms

Example:

- ✓ Programmers use their computers.
- ✓ Scientists describe their responsibilities.
- ✓ Teachers take their lunches here.

Use 'one' or 'who' or 'you':

- ✓ One can ask one's question at the end of the class.

Use gender-neutral forms instead

- ✓ 'chair' or 'chairperson',
- ✓ 'Police officer',
- ✓ 'spokesperson',
- ✓ 'director' or 'principal'
- ✓ 'humankind', 'humanity', 'human race'
- ✓ 'artificial', 'human-caused'

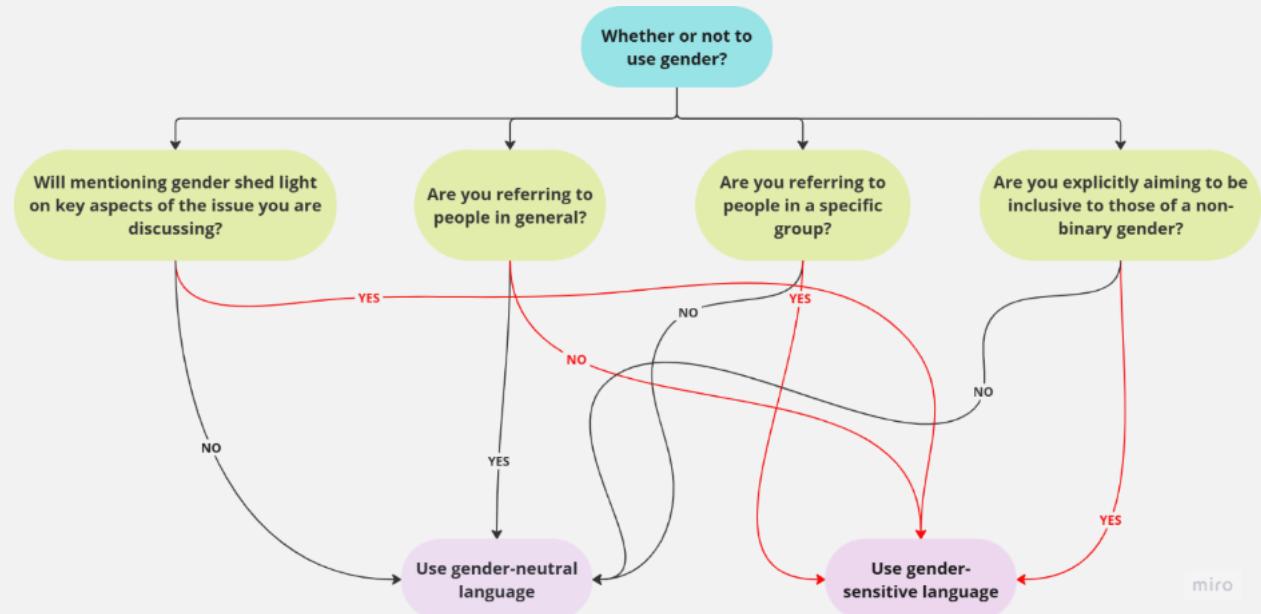
Use inclusive terms

Avoid specifying gender when talking about occupation and roles in general discussions, use inclusive terms.

Examples:

- ✓ 'Scientists'
- ✓ 'World of science/research'
- ✓ 'Women who are entrepreneurs'
- ✓ 'World of entrepreneurship'
- ✓ 'Businesses led by women'

The diagram below is designed to clarify the decision-making process for using gender-sensitive language and tone in various forms of communication. While the overlapping and intersecting arrows may initially appear complex, they illustrate the intricate connections between the concepts of gender and communication.



**Gender sensitivity is not merely a checklist but a nuanced approach that requires careful consideration of context, audience, and intent.** By understanding when to employ gender-sensitive language—such as using inclusive terms and avoiding stereotypes—and when to adopt a gender-sensitive tone—characterised by respect, openness, and awareness of power dynamics—communicators can foster a more inclusive environment.

This diagram serves as a valuable tool to guide individuals and organisations in their efforts to create communications that resonate with diverse audiences and reflect an understanding of gender inclusivity. It underscores the importance of being mindful and intentional in every interaction, ensuring that all voices are acknowledged and valued.

#### During events and activities, when presenting guests, and speakers:

- Use full first and last names for both women and men and avoid titles like 'mademoiselle' (FR) or 'Mrs.' (EN) that indicate a woman's marital status.

For example:

- Mr Paul Smith and Mrs Jane Jones are Code Week guest speakers.
- Paul Smith and Jane Jones are Code Week guest speakers.
- Always use the same naming conventions for men and women.

For example:

- Dr Smith and Dr Mrs Jones were the first to discover this phenomenon.
- Dr Smith and Dr Jones were the first to discover this phenomenon.
- Name all genders, ensuring inclusivity by using terms like 'students' or 'participants' instead of gender-specific language when possible.

For example:

- Boys and girls are welcome to attend the training.
- All participants are welcome to attend the training.
- When referring to gendered terms, vary the order. This helps in subtly promoting equality by ensuring no gender is always given precedence in order.

For example:

- Only saying "Boys and girls are welcome to attend the training."
- Also say "Girls and boys are welcome to attend the training."

#### **Key principles for inclusive language:**

1. Acknowledge and confront stereotypes.
2. Be inclusive by avoiding omission and preventing others from feeling invisible.
3. Be respectful by avoiding trivialisation and subordination.

## 1.2 Diverse and balanced gender representation

Ideas about the world are conveyed not only through language but also through the images we choose to present. **The term "visual communication" encompasses any materials used during presentations or introductions to tools and resources in workshops, any social media publications before or after activities, as well as any reporting or evaluation documents and surveys.**

- **Colours:** Keep inclusivity in mind when creating visual materials, whether for printed items like diplomas and certificates or digital content
  - Avoid colours that reinforce gender stereotypes, such as pink for girls and blue for boys. Instead, use a mix of colours and diversify without associating specific colours with any gender.
  - If uncertain about the colour palette, opt for neutral tones.
  - Choose colours that suit the context and align with the intended message.

- **Gender-Sensitive Order and Language:** When creating visual content, mix up the order of gendered terms like "girls and boys" and "boys and girls":
  - Try to avoid consistently placing one gender first; instead, alternate the order to promote balance and inclusivity.
  - Use language that reflects equality and embraces all genders, ensuring that your content is welcoming to everyone.
- **Diverse Imagery:** When selecting photos, illustrations, or graphics, aim to represent a broad spectrum of diversity in terms of age, gender, race, ability, and background:
  - Steer clear of stereotypical images; instead, showcase a variety of individuals actively participating in coding and tech activities.
  - Highlight diversity by including people from different walks of life, ensuring that everyone can see themselves represented in your materials.
- **Avoiding Gender Bias:** When featuring individuals in various roles, ensure representation of both men and women, as well as people from diverse backgrounds:
  - Highlight individuals in different positions, such as leaders, mentors, and learners, to showcase a broad spectrum of participation in tech.
  - This approach helps challenge and break down stereotypes about who "belongs" in the tech industry, promoting a more inclusive environment for everyone.
- **Representation in Tech Roles:** Ensure a balanced representation of women, men, and non-binary individuals in tech-related roles:
  - Feature individuals as mentors, participants, and professionals to demonstrate that tech and coding are fields open to everyone.
  - This reinforces the message that diversity is integral to the community.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** When promoting activities on an international scale, be mindful of cultural differences in gender norms, clothing, and customs:
  - Use visuals and language that respect and include diverse cultural contexts, ensuring that everyone feels welcomed and valued.
  - This approach fosters an inclusive environment that acknowledges and celebrates differences.
- **Emoji Awareness:** When using emojis in your communications, consider the diverse meanings and interpretations they can have across cultures:
  - Select emojis that reflect inclusivity and respect for various identities, avoiding those that may reinforce stereotypes or assumptions.

- This thoughtful approach helps create an environment where everyone feels acknowledged and represented, enhancing the overall message of your activities.

In visual content, such as posters, invitations, or social media posts:

- **Consider using an epicene pronoun.** An epicene pronoun is a gender-neutral, singular third-person pronoun that can help avoid gender stereotyping. This can be a good solution if you want to communicate inclusively. As epicene pronouns are sometimes experimental or unofficial, their usage may vary by region and context.

For example:

- English: During Code Week, each participant will choose a project that they feel passionate about, and we'll support them as they learn and grow.
- French: Pendant la Code Week, chaque participant·e choisira un projet qu'iel trouve passionnant, et nous les accompagnerons dans leur apprentissage et développement.
- **Consider using a median point or similar separator in languages** where both feminine and masculine forms of words exist. This approach provides an inclusive way to represent all genders.

For example:

- English: (s)he, she/he, or s/he
- French: participant·e, etudiant·e
- Spanish: amig\_ (the '\_' replaces the gendered endings "-o" or "-a," making it inclusive for people of any gender)

A quick guide to epicene pronouns in various European languages:

| Epicene pronouns | Language | Remarks  |
|------------------|----------|--|
| they/them        | English  |  |
| iel              | French   | Combination of 'il' and 'elle'                     |
| xier, sier, nin  | German   | Newer options; sometimes used in informal settings |
| elle             | Spanish  | Instead of él/ella                                 |
| lu/lə            | Italian  | For informal or experimental use                   |

|         |            |  |
|---------|------------|--|
| hen/hun | Dutch      |  |
| hen     | Swedish    | Widely accepted and used in formal and informal contexts                 |
| ono     | Polish     | Sometimes used informally, but gender-neutral language is still emerging |
| elu     | Portuguese | Instead of ele/ela, primarily in informal and activist circles           |
| hän     | Finnish    | Already a gender-neutral pronoun   |
| hen     | Norwegian  | Used as a neutral option alongside han (he) and hun (she)                |

## Promoting inclusivity across generations

The concept of **lifelong learning** has become increasingly important and **the age inclusivity** in educational environments is essential for fostering a society where everyone, regardless of age, can continue to grow and contribute. **Integrating age inclusivity into educational practices can support lifelong learning and reflect the diverse needs of the society.** This is particularly important in the digital age, where digital skills are essential for personal and professional development.

**When designing educational content, it is essential to customise and personalised learning experiences to adapt the diverse styles and developmental stages of students across different age groups.** These actions are critical to ensuring that the learning experience is engaging and effective. For this reason, educational content adaptation must have a connection with teaching methodology.

For **younger learners**, content should be presented in an interactive and simplified manner. Methodologies such as **game-based learning and gamification** can be highly effective. **Interactive storytelling, visual aids use, collaborative and physical explorations of coding and educational games can help younger learners grasp complex concepts.** Strawhacker and Bers (2019) state that the benefits of computer programming support the development of other cognitive domains in younger learners.

When introducing coding activities to develop computational thinking and digital skills, it is essential to align these activities with learners' existing knowledge and skill levels. Selecting activities that are too advance for beginners – like requiring intermediate coding knowledge – can lead to frustration and disengagement. Overall, starting with simple, accessible activities helps beginners develop a positive association with coding, leading to tackling more complex concepts as their skills grow.

As an example, the [Egg carton-unplugged](#) activity available on [EU Code Week website](#) is a hand-on and playful introduction to coding for children. The teaching strategy for children should incorporate active learning, where student can explore and engage physically and mentally. This can include techniques such as role play, group collaboration to encourage interaction.

**Older students** benefit from learning experience that encourage **critical thinking and application of knowledge in a real-world environment**/situation. The content should be interactive and **problem-solving** orientated, with emphasis on collaboration, digital tools and metacognitive practices.

Adult learners benefit from practical real-world application of knowledge; they often have specific goals and require content that is immediately applicable to their personal or professional life. Adult education methodology often uses case-based learning or experiential learning where applied theories to practical solutions. Teaching strategies should focus on case studies, simulations and self-directed learning methods as well as collaborative learning where they can share experiences with peers.

According to the [Special Eurobarometer 493 report on discrimination in the EU](#), many respondents believe that age discrimination is prevalent within educational settings. **This perception can influence the experiences of both younger and older students, affecting their engagement and opportunities for learning.** A notable portion of individuals reported personal experiences of discrimination, including age-related bias. This suggests that ageism may hinder inclusive educational practices and the overall learning environment. To address these issues, the report emphasizes the importance of diverse age representation within educational materials and practices.

## Accessible and inclusive learning content and activities

**Accessibility** refers to the design of environment, products and services in a way that allow individuals with diverse needs, including physical and learning disabilities, to fully participate and engage.

This document will not focus on specific physical or learning disabilities; instead, it aims to provide general information and adaptable guidelines suitable for diverse learning contexts. The strategies and recommendations included here are **intended to be flexible**, allowing educators and practitioners to tailor activities and content to meet the unique needs of their learners. While these guidelines offer a foundation, additional adjustments will be necessary to address the specific disabilities or challenges each learner may experience.

When creating educational content, it is essential to prioritise accessible design in learning activities, not only support inclusivity but also enhancing learning outcomes for everyone involved, ensuring meaningful participation. **This includes offering structured and predictable formats, reducing unnecessary complexity, and providing multiple ways to engage with content.**

**Participation** can be seen as a fundamental human need essential for well-being and development. Additionally, it can also be seen as a right, entitlement that duty bearers (government, institutions and professionals) must guarantee to its citizens.

Tip: If you would like to learn more about Access & Participation, we invite you to check the iBox self-paced training on [ALL DIGITAL Academy](#). The training is available in English, and it is free of charge.

### 1.3 Respectful language and terminology

**Using respectful, person-fit language** is essential for creating inclusive educational materials. This means prioritising terms that respect individual dignity and being specific about the type of disability when necessary to avoid generalisation.

Additionally, be aware of possible **ableism** when using language. **This term describes the tendency for non-disabled individuals to see themselves as “normal”, treating those with disabilities as an exception.** Ableist language can sometimes inadvertently appear in terminology, so the following section provides examples of terms to avoid:

- “**Suffering from**”, “**Impacted By**”, “**Challenged With**”, “**Living With**”: these terms should be **avoided** as they can imply emotional judgement and carry negative connotation. Instead, it is more neutral and respectful to refer to an individual’s “life experience” of a condition.
- “**Handicap**”: This term, in all its forms, **has been rejected** by the disability community for decades.
- “**High functioning**” and “**Low functioning**”: these terms **denote** a disabled person’s ability to live in the world; they should be avoided as they place undue judgement on a person’s capabilities and do not reflect on a holistic understanding of their experience.

**Avoiding negative or second-class terminology is essential to promote inclusive and respectful language around disability.** Tools and techniques used by individuals with disability are not substitutes or inferior but are, instead, referred to “alternative technique”. Using outdated language that implies that these techniques are lesser or merely compensatory can perpetuate misconceptions and communicate a sense of difference. In the table below are examples of outdated versus inclusive approaches to terminology:

| Outdated approach                                     | Inclusive approach   |
|---|--|
| “Assistive Technology”,<br>“Adaptive Technology”      | “Access technology”  |
| “Support”, “Help”, “Helper”                           | “Partner”, “Describer”, “Interpreter”, “Volunteer”   |
| “Getting independence back”                           | “Uses powerful or elegant or efficient tools”  |
| “Inspiration”, “Inspirational”, “Brave”, “Courageous” | Avoid language that conveys sentimentality or turns individuals with disabilities into symbols of inspiration, as this can reinforce stereotypes |

## 1.4 Inclusive visuals portraying individuals with disabilities

Visual representation in educational contents should include individuals with disabilities across various contexts, not only in section about disability. This normalisation help promote acceptance and awareness; images that feature

individual using wheelchairs, wearing hearing aids or representing various cognitive disabilities should be integrated into all type of contents. Additionally, it is important to **keep in mind that not all disabilities are visible**.

When including visuals in the content creation, it is essential that these visuals reflect the diversity of population by featuring individuals of different genders, ages, abilities, and ethnicities, shown in a variety of roles and functions. This supports to challenge stereotypes, such as assumptions about people with learning disabilities or limiting gender-specific roles in digital technologies.

## 1.5 Web Accessibility

In the digital age, ensuring that educational websites are inclusive and accessible is necessary. This means adhering to accessibility standards such as the web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG), which recommend practices like providing text alternatives for non-text content, ensuring that all content can be accessed through a keyboard and offering sufficient contrast for visually impaired users. Inclusive web design also involves creating content that is linguistically diverse, catering to students who speak different languages and ensuring that information is presented in a way that respects various cultural perspectives.

The first pillar of the European Pillar of social rights (2017) states that “everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successful transitions in the labour market.”. In addition, the Digital Education Action Plan (2021 – 2027) sets a common vision of high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education across Europe, supporting the adaptation of education and training systems to the digital age. **While the transition to digital education is inevitable, it must be implemented in a way that caters to the needs of all individuals effectively. The EU Directive on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies (2016)** concerns all websites, apps and files of the public administration or created with public money. This directive underscores the importance of inclusive practices in various domains, including content creation, website development and event organisation. These policies aim to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their abilities, can access and participate fully in digital and physical environments.

**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0** are technical standards for web accessibility and cover a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible. These guidelines are developed in cooperation with individuals and organisations around the world, with a goal of providing a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organisations, and governments internationally.

WCAG involve a wide range of disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities. Although these guidelines cover a wide range of issues, they are not able to address the needs of people with all types, degrees, and combinations of disability. These guidelines also make Web content more usable by older individuals with changing abilities due to aging and often improve usability for users in general.

WCAG outlines **four guiding principles to ensure accessibility**:

- **Perceivable** - This means that users must be able to perceive the information being presented (it cannot be invisible to all of their senses)

- **Operable** - This means that users must be able to operate the interface (the interface cannot require interaction that a user cannot perform)
- **Understandable** - This means that users must be able to understand the information as well as the operation of the user interface (the content or operation cannot be beyond their understanding)
- **Robust** - This means that users must be able to access the content as technologies advance (as technologies and user agents evolve, the content should remain accessible)

Web accessibility allows everyone to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Internet. **Simple changes that make websites and apps more accessible can help everyone.** For instance, being able to listen to text when it is too dark to read or reading subtitles on videos in a noisy environment.

## 1.6 Inclusive design

Inclusive content creation involves providing multiple interaction formats to cater to different needs and abilities. This means employing formats like text, audio, video and visuals to reach diverse audiences, along with integrating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. **Three main principles of UDL are Engagement, representation and Action and Expression (CAST, n.d.),** and, applying them in the learning environments supports creation of optimal learning experiences for all individuals, regardless of their abilities or learning styles.

**Applying the multiple means of engagement** focuses on providing various ways for participants to engage with content, such as interactive quizzes, Q&A sessions or live polling during digital events. **Providing multiple means of action and expression** allows learners to demonstrate their understanding in various ways. Lastly, providing the **multiple means of representation** focuses on presentation of content in various formats, such as visual aids, graphic organisers and infographics, allowing each participant to choose the medium that best suits them.

The educational content needs to be flexible, accessible, and understandable to all learners. Engaging diverse stakeholders in the design process, including educators, learners and accessibility experts, ensures that the final content meets the needs of all users effectively. Collaboration fosters intuitive solutions and ensures that the inclusive design is informed by lived experiences. **Adapting materials can positively impact the learning experiences of all learners,** especially learners with Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs) and other forms of disabilities. However, it is essential to keep in mind that **not all adaptations will work for every learner.**

To adapt the activities for wider group of learners, it is necessary to **provide a quiet, uncluttered environment for learning.** When designing the activities and the content, try to use a variety of skill sets and tools to stimulate the learning process. The activities should have clear goals, clear guidelines, and, if necessary, a subdivision of tasks in small steps.

For **multimedia content**, it is essential to provide captions and transcripts to assist users who are deaf or hard of hearing: use **video content** with captions, sign language interpretation and clear, high-quality visuals to make information accessible. Incorporate **audio descriptions for visual content**, like videos or infographics, to support

visually impaired users and individuals with lower literacy skills. Additionally, it is important **to provide written versions of all audio and video content**, including transcripts for speeches and subtitles for videos.

Providing **clear, easy-to-understand instructions** demonstrating each step can help learners understand and complete activities more effectively. Additionally, providing too much information can be overwhelming and discouraging for learners. Using the consistent language, presentation style, and format will also help avoid confusion. Structure content effectively is crucial as organising information with headings, subheadings, bullet points and short paragraphs aids users in navigating and comprehending the material more easily.

To create inclusive written content, **opt for accessible fonts**. **Sans serif fonts such as Arial, Century Gothic, Verdana and OpenDys are ideal**. Line spacing should be 1.5, and **the font size should be between 12 and 14 to ensure a more effortless reading flow**. If you want to emphasise something in the text, write it in **bold** and avoid italics or underlining.

When using visual content, remember to provide **alternative text** for images, including **descriptive alt text for images**, graphs, and non-text elements ensures that visually impaired users can grasp the content fully. Additionally, **include descriptive links is necessary** as it should convey the link's purpose, avoiding vague phrases like "click here."

**Ensure sufficient contrast** between text and background is vital for improving readability, particularly for individuals with low vision or colour blindness. Visual aids, such as semantic maps and graphic organisers as this help make abstract concepts more understandable for learners.

If you are printing the materials, think about **the thickness of the paper**. The text will show on the other side of the paper if it is too thin. On the other hand, the thick paper will help prevent transparency and, consequently, help with concentration. Make sure to print only on one side of the paper to avoid turning pages.

Lastly, it is essential to **create joyful and playful activities** with more than one possible solution that encourage learners to explore.

## Cultural Inclusivity

Cultural inclusivity in the European Union is essential for fostering unity, equity, and innovation across its diverse member states. As the EU is home to people from various cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds, inclusivity ensures that all individuals feel respected and valued. This approach promotes social cohesion, reduces discrimination, and enhances collaboration across borders. In education and employment, cultural inclusivity drives equitable access to opportunities and leverages diverse perspectives to foster creativity and innovation. Policies like the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan and initiatives like Creative Europe aim to celebrate cultural diversity while addressing systemic inequalities.

Creating culturally inclusive content is essential as it reflects cultural diversity, fosters respectful communication and enhances engagement with global communities. Culturally sensitive content acknowledges the social, historical and religious of each group, ensuring that cultural identities are respected and valued. As noted by UNESCO, cultural diversity is "a powerful force for development, not only in terms of economic growth but also as a mean of leading a more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life" (UNESCO, 2001). **Embracing cultural diversity in**

**educational content is crucial for building a more inclusive, equitable society that celebrates differences and respects cultural integrity.**

Cultural diversity should be viewed as an opportunity to enrich visual and textual storytelling. Visual and textual representation must be varied, respectful and mindful of the impact they have on audience. **Cultural appropriation**, defined as the inappropriate use of symbols attire or tradition from one culture by individuals or a group from another, should be avoided to prevent harm and the perpetuation of colonising or discriminatory narratives.

**Intercultural inclusion is essential for supporting lifelong learning.** Fostering intercultural understanding and empathy through educational content is encouraging appreciation of other cultural perspective. This can be achieved by creating content that accurately represents diverse cultures, avoids stereotypes and uses respectful and neutral language.

Vulnerable groups, including migrants, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and people with low education level, should have equal access to educational and informational contents. The well-represented diversity is **not only about respect but also promoting equitable and inclusive learning.**

Language support and localisation is key to ensuring content is accessible and relevant across different geographical regions, allowing for effective global communication (LISA, 2007). **Language itself carries cultural significance and terms used in digital content should reflect respect and inclusivity.**

**Avoiding ethnic slurs or pejorative terms:** choosing the right language shows a commitment to understand diverse backgrounds. For instance, even though certain ethnic slurs and pejorative terms were commonly used in the past, their presence in content today – especially in global and public spaces - can evoke pain and reinforce stereotypes or divide specific audience. For this reason, their use should be avoided or treated with extreme sensitivity.

**Using terms as a community preference:** equally important is aligning with the preferences of communities regarding the terms used to describe them: due to the fact that languages standards are dynamic, acknowledging these preferences demonstrates respect and attentiveness.

**Translation and local languages support:** multilingual support in digital content breaks down barriers for audience may feel excluded if only a dominant language is used. By translating content in various local languages, creators can expand their reach and foster genuine engagement across different groups.

**Importance of localisation:** according to UNESCO, creating truly inclusive environment requires educational content that is not just translated but also localised to reflect the specific cultural context of target communities. **Localisation** involves adapting content to align with cultural values and norms. For example, image and example should resonate with diverse cultures and avoid globalised and stereotypical perspective.

**Cultural inclusivity from a gendered perspective** in initiatives like EU Code Week involves creating an environment that values and supports diverse gender identities while acknowledging the intersection of culture and gender. Recognising and addressing the unique barriers faced by women, non-binary individuals, and other underrepresented genders across different cultural contexts helps create more equitable opportunities in education, employment, and governance. Initiatives that emphasise cultural inclusivity ensure that diverse perspectives are not only acknowledged but celebrated, fostering a society where innovation and inclusivity thrive together.

From a broader EU perspective, **representation of gender and cultural diversity is crucial for shaping a future that aligns with the Union's core values of equality, democracy, and human rights**. Studies have shown that inclusive policies boost economic performance and innovation by leveraging the untapped potential of marginalised groups. For instance, addressing the gender gap in STEM fields could add billions to the EU's economy, while fostering inclusivity strengthens social cohesion, reduces discrimination, and enhances the Union's global leadership on diversity.

## Importance of cultural inclusivity with a gendered lens

### 1. Addressing gender disparities in tech

Globally, women and non-binary individuals remain underrepresented in technology fields. Tailoring coding events to cultural contexts helps overcome gender-based barriers, especially in regions where societal norms might limit women's participation in STEM.

### 2. Empowering role models

Featuring diverse role models from various cultural backgrounds inspires participants. It demonstrates that individuals of all genders can succeed in tech, regardless of their cultural context.

### 3. Intersectionality in design

Understanding that gender intersects with race, ethnicity, and culture allows initiatives to better address the needs of participants who might face multiple layers of discrimination.

### 4. Language and representation

Providing materials in multiple languages and using inclusive imagery and narratives ensures that gender diversity is reflected across cultures, fostering a sense of belonging.

### 5. Challenging stereotypes

Activities that highlight contributions from women and non-binary technologists across cultures challenge stereotypes, promoting a more balanced view of who belongs in tech.

Some examples of best practices of cultural inclusivity through a gendered lens:

- **EU Code Week Initiatives:** Projects encouraging the participation of girls and women aim to reduce the gender gap in tech by addressing cultural and societal barriers.
- **Laboratoria (Latin America):** A coding school focusing on empowering women from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter the tech industry, tailored to their local cultural contexts.
- **Girls Who Code:** International efforts often include culturally specific adaptations to make coding more accessible to girls from diverse backgrounds.

## Create safe and inclusive spaces: venue accessibility and accommodations

Ensuring that the materials and facilities are accessible to all individuals is a priority that is often overlooked.

Accessibility is not only about access for people with disabilities but also about recognising that there is a diversity and multiplicity of barriers that people may face: economic barriers, illiteracy, lack of skills, neurodivergence and other factors.

**Creating safe and inclusive spaces during EU Code Week events is crucial for fostering an environment where everyone feels welcome, respected, and supported, regardless of their background, identity, or skill level.** The primary goal is to ensure that participants from diverse groups, including women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and individuals from underserved communities, can fully engage in the learning experience.

Hosting an inclusive event requires thoughtful planning and an understanding of the diverse needs of participants. For an in-person event this could mean that venues are physically accessible, offering sign languages interpretation, providing material in multiple formats (such as large print or braille) and being mindful of dietary restrictions when catering. Organisers should also create a welcoming and protected atmosphere where everyone can share their thoughts experiences.

Online events present a different set of challenges and opportunities for inclusion. While virtual platforms can broaden access by allowing participants from remote and rural locations, they can also create barriers for those without reliable internet access or adequate technology.

To make online events more inclusive, it is important to offer multiple ways to engage participants, such as live captions, recorder session and participation through chat or audio. To foster small group discussion, breakout rooms can be used, making the experience more personal and inclusive. Organisers should be also mindful about the time zones and offer flexible scheduling to accommodate participants from different regions.

Here is some advice on how to create safe and inclusive spaces:

### 1. Establish clear guidelines

- Code of Conduct: Develop and communicate a code of conduct emphasising respect, non-discrimination, and zero tolerance for harassment. For example, in the [EU Code Week Hackathons Toolkit](#), there is already defined Code of Conduct that all participants should follow.
- Accessibility information for in-person events: Share details about venue accessibility (e.g., ramps, elevators) and accommodations (e.g., sign language interpreters or sensory-friendly rooms).

### 2. Inclusive event design

- Representation: Invite diverse speakers and mentors, particularly women and underrepresented groups in tech.

- Language accessibility: Provide materials in multiple languages and consider translation or interpretation services.
- Accessible timing: Schedule events at times that accommodate a variety of participants, including working professionals and parents.

### 3. Safe physical and virtual spaces

- Physical setup: Create spaces that are well-lit, have open layouts, and provide private areas for breaks or personal needs.
- Moderation in virtual spaces: For online events, have moderators to prevent disruptive or inappropriate behaviour.
- Feedback mechanism: Provide anonymous feedback forms for participants to report any issues or suggest improvements.

### 4. Intersectional considerations

- Cultural sensitivity: Respect diverse cultural practices, including dietary restrictions or religious observances.
- Technology access: Offer loaner devices or on-site access to ensure that lack of equipment does not exclude anyone.

## A quick checklist of Do's and Don'ts

- **Simple language:** Use clear, everyday language with active verb forms, avoiding jargon and slang, and focusing on a single main idea per paragraph.
- **Using respectful, person-fit language** is essential for creating inclusive educational materials. Be aware of possible **ableism**.
- Readability of the written digital content: **Opt for clear, easy-to-read fonts with adequate size**, typically at least 11pt, to enhance readability. Avoid fonts smaller than 9pt (12px), with 11pt (15px) being a recommended standard according to WCAG.
- Logical content structure: Use headings, lists, and other structural elements to organise content. This aids screen readers in providing an overview of the page.
- Providing **clear, easy-to-understand instructions** demonstrating each step can help learners understand and complete activities more effectively.

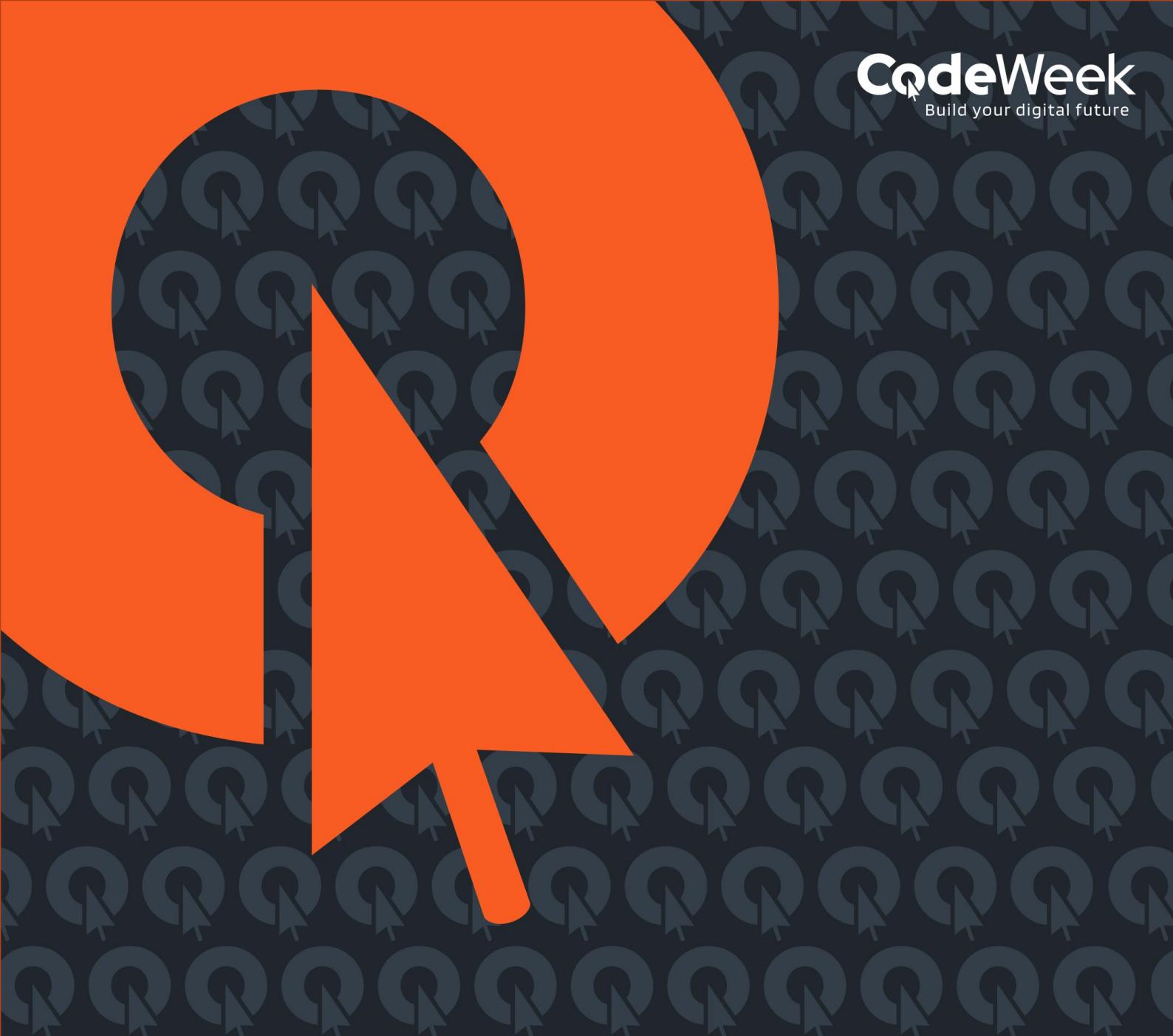
- Visuals should reflect the diversity of population: choose images of individuals that are diverse in terms of gender, disability, age and ethnicity and represented in various roles and functions.
- Challenge stereotypes** in visuals (such as stereotypes about people with learning disabilities or gender stereotypes).
- When using visual content**, remember to provide **alternative text** for images, including descriptive alt text for images, graphs, and non-text elements.
- Provide transcripts for videos and audio content.**
- Colours:** Keep inclusivity in mind when creating visual materials, whether for printed items like diplomas and certificates or digital content.
  - Avoid colours that reinforce gender stereotypes, such as pink for girls and blue for boys. Instead, use a mix of colours and diversify without associating specific colours with any gender.
  - If uncertain about the colour palette, opt for neutral tones.
  - Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background (you can use Coolors Color Contrast Checker: <https://coolors.co/contrast-checker/112a46-acc8e5>)
- Gender-sensitive order and language:** When creating visual content, mix up the order of gendered terms like "girls and boys" and "boys and girls":
- Cultural sensitivity:** When promoting activities on an international scale, be mindful of cultural differences in gender norms, clothing, and customs
- The well-represented diversity is **not only about respect, but also promoting equitable and inclusive learning**
- Emoji awareness:** When using emojis in your communications, consider the diverse meanings and interpretations they can have across cultures
- Consider using an epicene pronoun. An **epicene pronoun** is a gender-neutral, singular third-person pronoun that can help avoid gender stereotyping.
- Conduct user testing with individuals from diverse backgrounds to identify barriers and improve usability.**

## References and additional useful resources

1. Bashin, B. (2024) Be My Eyes “Inclusive Language” Guide: <https://www.bemyeyes.com/blog/be-my-eyes-inclusive-language-guide>

2. Coolors Color Contrast Checker: [Color Contrast Checker](#)
3. Deque Systems (n.d.) The Beginner's Guide to Web Accessibility: <https://www.deque.com/web-accessibility-beginners-guide/#what-is-a11y>
4. Digital Accessibility Package: [Digital Accessibility Package - European Disability Forum](#)
5. EU Code Week Blog (2023) Embracing diversity through code: Celebrating World Day for Cultural Diversity with Code Week  
<https://codeweek.eu/blog/embracing-diversity-through-code-celebrating-world-day-for-cultural-diversity-with-code-week/>
6. EU Code Week Blog (2023) Europe Day: Celebrating unity and diversity through coding  
<https://codeweek.eu/blog/europe-day-celebrating-unity-and-diversity-through-coding/>
7. EU Code Week Blog (2023): Skilling Youth for a Transformative Future  
<https://codeweek.eu/blog/eu-code-week-skilling-youth-for-a-transformative-future/>
8. EU Code Week Blog (2024) Coding Across Cultures <https://codeweek.eu/blog/coding-across-cultures-how-the-world-teaches-tech-in-unique-ways/>
9. European Commission (2019) Discrimination in the European Union: [Special Eurobarometer 493: Discrimination in the EU \(including LGBTI\)](#)
10. European Commission (2020) The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025:  
[https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)
11. European Commission (2020): EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025:  
[https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en)
12. European Commission (2023): Report on Discrimination in the EU:  
<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2972>
13. European Commission (n.d.) AccessibleEU Initiative: [https://accessible-eu-centre.ec.europa.eu/about-accessibleeu\\_en](https://accessible-eu-centre.ec.europa.eu/about-accessibleeu_en)
14. European Commission: Creative Europe Programme. <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe>
15. European Institute for Gender Equality - Economic Benefits of Gender Equality in the European Union: [https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/economic-benefits-gender-equality?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/economic-benefits-gender-equality?language_content_entity=en)
16. European Institute for Gender Equality (n.d.) Gender Equality Glossary and Thesaurus:  
<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/overview>
17. Fairness in Teaching: <https://www.fairnessinteaching-project.eu/>
18. For more information on preparing accessible digital content for learners with specific learning disorders, we invite you to consult the [Accessible Digital Education Project](#).

19. Guidance for Accessible and Inclusive Meetings and Events: [https://ethnichealthresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Accessible-and-Inclusive-Events-Guidance-12\\_12\\_23.pdf](https://ethnichealthresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Accessible-and-Inclusive-Events-Guidance-12_12_23.pdf)
20. Inclusion Box (EU-funded project: ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PCOOP-ENGO) Inclusion and Diversity Charter: [https://043d9157-1555-4eae-b4ad-87f18463e331.usrfiles.com/ugd/043d91\\_3d2062f5af8447839e83efc62886e5d3.pdf](https://043d9157-1555-4eae-b4ad-87f18463e331.usrfiles.com/ugd/043d91_3d2062f5af8447839e83efc62886e5d3.pdf)
21. Katiraei, N., Berti, N., Das, A., Zennaro, I., Aldrichetti, R., Dimovski, V., ... & Battini, D. (2024). A new roadmap for an age-inclusive workforce management practice and an international policies comparison. *Open Research Europe*, 4(85), 85. <https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/articles/4-85>
22. Laboratoria: <https://www.laboratoria.la/>
23. [Strategies for Digital Inclusion: Towards a Pedagogy for Embracing and Sustaining Student Diversity and Engagement with Online Learning](#)
24. The CAP project (Active Cooperation for Potential) - Erasmus+ <https://wide.lu/cap-la-cooperation-active-le-potentiel/>
25. UNESCO (2001) Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Paris, UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/unesco-universal-declaration-cultural-diversity>
26. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2021) Inclusive lifelong learning in cities: Policies and practices for vulnerable groups. Hamburg, UNESCO UIL.  
[https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef\\_0000379538&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach\\_import\\_4a9c0b82-9757-40f5-bc90-d5a991c30a9c%3F\\_%3D379538eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000379538/PDF/379538eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A216%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C-173%2C595%2C0%5D](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_0000379538&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_4a9c0b82-9757-40f5-bc90-d5a991c30a9c%3F_%3D379538eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000379538/PDF/379538eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A216%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C-173%2C595%2C0%5D)
27. United Nations (n.d.) Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English: <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>
28. World Health Organization. (2011). Gender mainstreaming for health managers: a practical approach. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
29. World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals>
30. World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2 Overview: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>



#### Legal Disclaimer

*The European Commission's support to produce this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

Project funded via a Digital Europe Programme grant 101158834  
Copyright © 2024 by EU Codeweek  
All rights reserved



Funded by  
the European Union