

Diversity, Inclusivity and Intersectionality



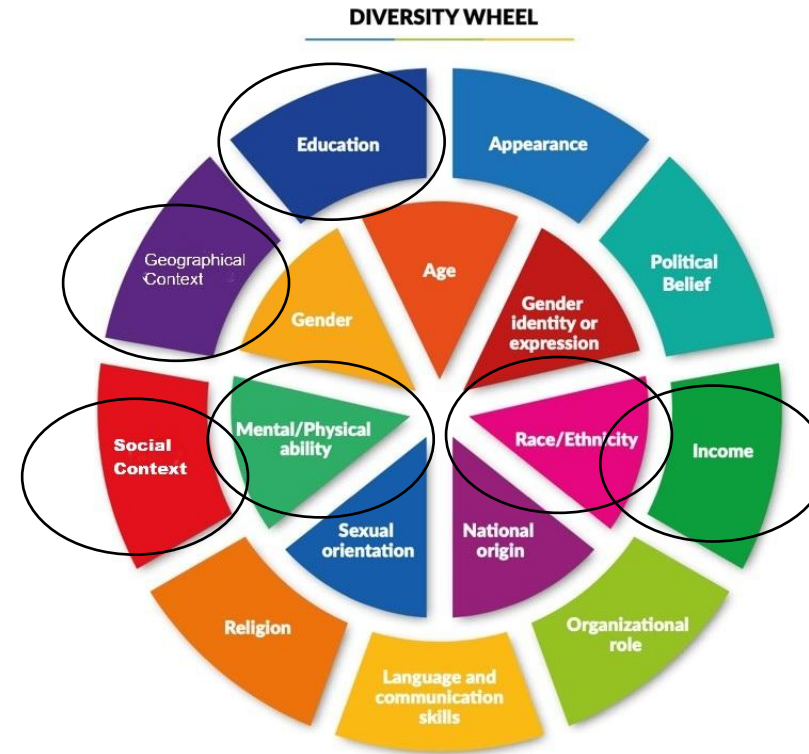
Understanding the concepts

If we want to understand inclusive communication, we need to understand the related concepts of diversity, inclusivity and intersectionality.

Diversity & Inclusivity

The **diversity wheel** represents the various **dimensions of diversity** which, combined, influence our behaviours, beliefs, values, expectations and experiences.

The aspects with a circle are currently identified by the European Union as more critical for inclusion than the others.



„Diversity Wheel – EU Citizen Science“: <https://eu-citizen.science/blog/2024/08/21/diversity-and-inclusion-a-reflection/> adjusted by Lisa Wiedemann

Diversity Wheel

The wheel has two concentric circles. The inner circle encompasses internal dimensions (personal attributes) attributes such as age, race, gender, physical ability, and sexual orientation that people are born with. These are often protected under anti-discrimination laws. The outer circle covers external dimensions (social attributes) like education, income, religion, geographic location, and work experience.



By employing the Diversity Wheel, one can gain a better understanding of how various identity facets overlap and interact.

For example, in a conversation, a young girl, who comes from a rural area and who did not have the opportunity to finish high school, may feel excluded from a conversation with her cousins, who live in the capital, who are at university and have their own income. Her cousins may use different words, may talk about subjects that the young girl doesn't know, and refer to situations or objects that only exist in the capital. It could even be that the students feel superior to the girl because they are studying or because they live in the city, or just because they are older.

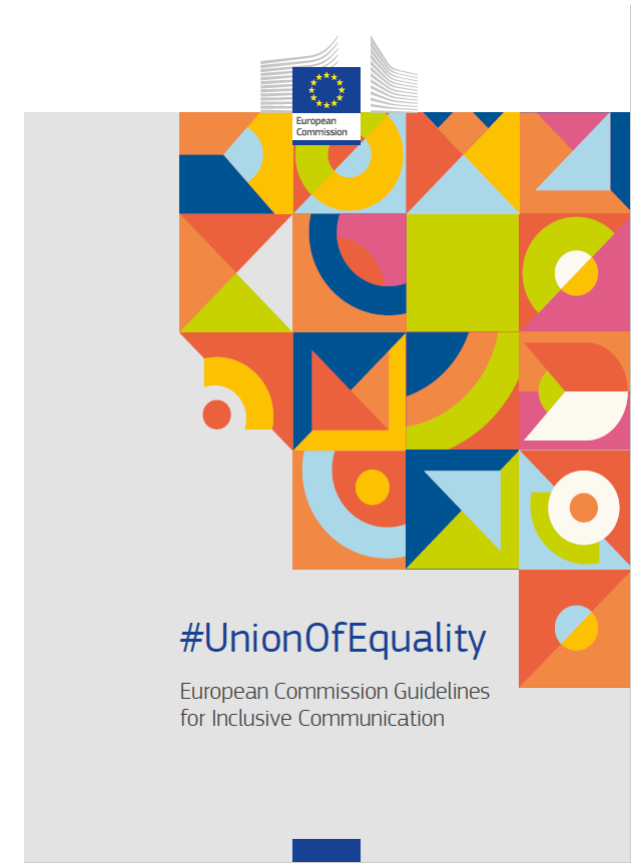
Do you know this kind of situation?

The diversity wheel can help organisations/institutions/companies to pinpoint certain areas they want to focus on more with targeted approaches or consider where there may be areas lacking in their approach to create more inclusive communication.

Have a look on the European Union Guideline about inclusive communication. Which aspects of the diversity wheel are more in focus in this guide?

[Guidelines for Inclusive Communication](#)

If you cannot read the English version of this guide, try out AI supported translation.



Source: <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/system/files/2024-11/european-commission-guidelines.pdf>

Activity



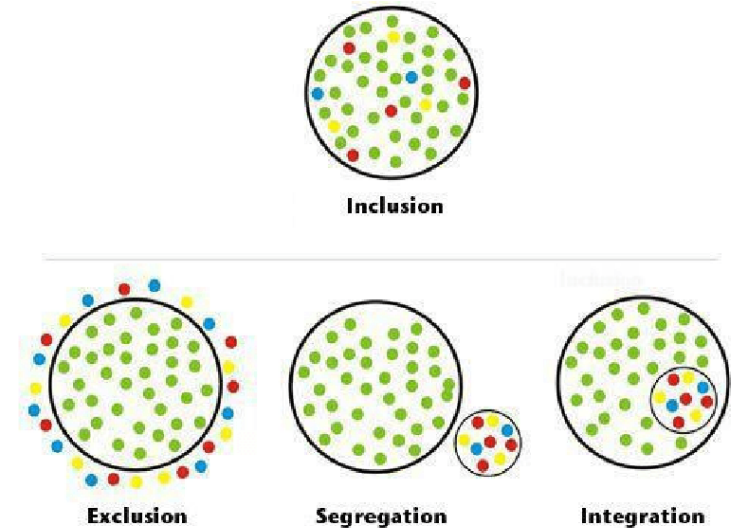
Search of a regional or national organization that is relevant for your future workplace (e.g. chambers of trade, business organisations, universities, labour organisations etc.) and check if there is any inclusive communication guideline available.

Identify which of the diversity aspects are specifically considered in this guideline. Do you think that there should be other aspects included?

Inclusion

Inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society.

Many institutions began their work with a focus on gender equality, often framed in terms of family-friendliness and accommodating care responsibilities. Over time, this focus expanded to include other grounds of discrimination, such as disability, ethnic origin, religion, age, and sexual identity.



Intersectionality

Communication does not happen in an empty space. Communication is an interactive process in a specific context. If we want to implement an inclusive communication practice, it is important to understand how the different aspects of identity overlap and interrelate in the context of communication.

For instance, a woman who has a permanent position and strong networks, may find it easier to advocate for women's rights than a younger girl living in a disadvantaged area. In the public perception, the experiences and discrimination faced by young women in disadvantaged areas are then less heard.

Indeed, not only the context shapes communication – but communication practice also transform the context.

Let's have a look on some of the aspects that constitutes the context of communication practice: Power, Privilege and Positionality

Power

Power refers to the ability—whether formal or informal—to influence others, make decisions, and shape narratives or norms. At your university, for example, power is embedded in hierarchies, disciplinary boundaries, curriculum design, language use, and institutional traditions. It influences who gets to speak, be heard, who must listen, who is asked to give their opinion, who takes formally part in communication.

For example, in a traditional class setting, it is the professor who speaks, and the students must listen. They are not allowed to express their opinion unless the professors explicitly asks for their input.

Privilege

Privilege is the unearned advantage conferred by systems that favour certain identities over others. Privilege often operates invisibly to those who hold it, and can manifest through racial, gendered, ableist, or class-based assumptions baked into structures and expectations. For example, some groups are privileged in conversations or some ways to speak are more valid representing specific communication norms than others.

For example, people from rural areas sometimes use words from a rural dialect. However, their communication style may be less valid than that of people who are used to speaking the language of the capital.

Positionality

Positionality refers to the recognition that our perspectives are shaped by our social and political identities (such as race, gender, class, nationality, or ability) and the specific contexts in which we are located—these form a “lens” through which we speak. In inclusive communication, acknowledging one’s positionality means being aware of how our background and identity influence the way we speak, interpret message, engage in communication with others, and navigate power dynamics. It requires continuous reflection on **how we may communicate to or disrupt systems of power and privilege** — whether as students, employees, team leaders, colleagues etc.

Inclusive Communication

Inclusive Communication refers to the intentional practice of creating communication environments where all individuals—regardless of background, identity, ability, status, privileges – are:

- heard (their voice matters)
- valued (they're not just tolerated, but welcomed)
- respected (their input is considered meaningful)
- able to contribute safely (without fear of ridicule, dismissal, or harm)

Inclusive Communication

Inclusive communication is not just about being "polite" or "nice." It involves:

- awareness of power dynamics, privileges, positions, multiple identities
- respect for different communication styles (cultural, neurodiverse, etc.)
- a commitment to equity in participation

Inclusive Communication - Definition

- Diversity is being invited to a meeting.
- Inclusion is having your ideas considered.
- Inclusive communication is being given space to speak, without interruption or judgment, in a way that works for you.

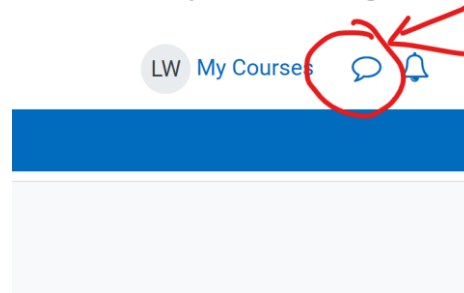
Activity



→ Do you agree with this definition?

Draft your own inclusive communication definition, post this definition in your student chat by using the group conversation of the e-Learning platform.

Click here:



Give feedback to one other definition in the chat.

Recognizing Non-Inclusive Communication

1. Language Gaps

- Jargon or idioms not understood by non-native speakers.
- Speaking too fast, unclearly, or using culturally specific references.

2. Stereotypes

- Assuming skills or limitations based on someone's identity.
- E.g., “She’s too emotional to lead”

3. Unconscious Bias

- Preferring input from those similar to us without realizing it.

4. Microaggressions

- Subtle slights, often unintentional, that make someone feel "othered."
- E.g., “You’re so articulate for someone from that area.”

5. Lack of Psychological Safety

- Fear of speaking up due to risk of ridicule, rejection, or being ignored.

Activity



Discuss with other students:

- Who usually speaks the most in meetings or discussions?
- Who gets interrupted?
- Are there people who never speak? Why might that be?

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