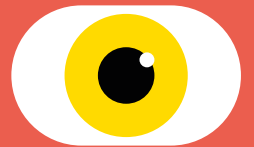
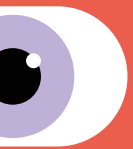
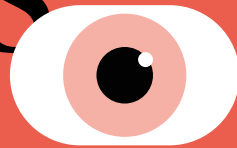
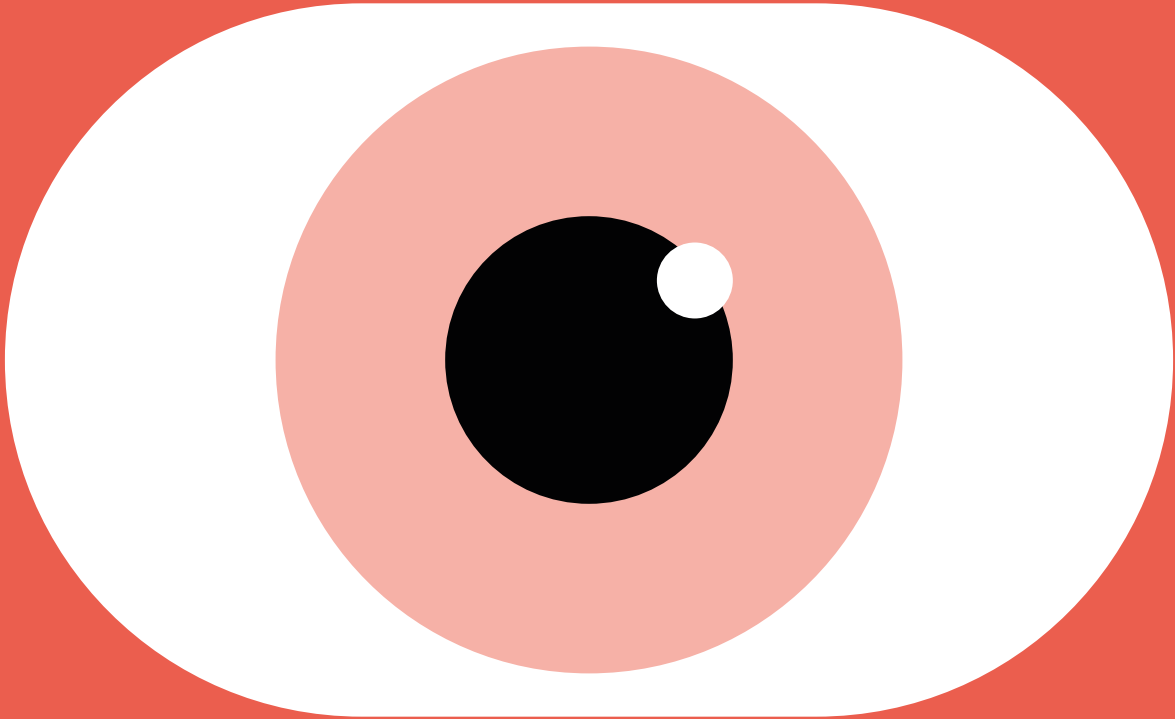


Diversity, equity  
and inclusion  
guidelines



for the Belgian marketing  
and communication sector

#OpenToChange



ACC, BAM, Creative Belgium, UBA and UMA commit to work on improving diversity, equity and inclusion in the Belgian marcom sector. We want our members to partake in this commitment so that, together, we can create a positive impact on society. These Guidelines were developed in association with Allyens, a strategic agency, specialized in inclusive marketing and communication.



with the support of



1

What

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Terminology

1

What

What do we mean by diversity,  
equity and inclusion?

We actively work on raising awareness about  
the meaning of diversity, equity and inclusion.

1

# What do we mean by diversity, equity and inclusion?

By diversity, equity and inclusion<sup>1</sup> we mean:

- Diversity: The fact that people differ from one another on multiple dimensions and in different contexts. Experiences, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social status, disability, neurodiversity, education, and family status are a few examples.
- Equity: Equity recognizes that each person has a different starting point and allocates the suitable attention, resources and opportunities needed to reach a level playing field.
- Inclusion: Continuously and actively working on a culture, an environment or a system that is accessible to or includes everyone.

As a member of one of the initiating federations in the marketing and communication sector, we hope you can recognize yourself in the definitions of these terms and that you will look for personalized ways to work on diversity, equity and inclusion.

<sup>1</sup> A commonly used abbreviation of diversity, equity and inclusion is DE&I.

2

Why

Why is it important for our sector  
to work on diversity, equity and inclusion?

We acknowledge why, as a sector, we work on implementing  
measures to support and promote diversity, equity and inclusion.  
By working on DE&I we strive for a positive impact.

2

## Why is it important for our sector to work on diversity, equity and inclusion?

By working on DE&I we strive for a positive impact.

- For our talent: We want to attract a diverse group of talent, improve employee wellbeing and create an environment where everyone belongs.
- For our sector: We want to boost productivity, creativity and innovative thinking. We want to stay ahead as a sector.
- For society: We are a human sector grounded in society. The cultural and social context we exist in is of great importance to us and we aim to constantly adapt so that we can better reflect society, respond to societal needs, and communicate with our audience. We strive to create meaningful representation and impactful communication all around.

In October 2019, Creative Belgium did a baseline measurement that covered everything from how people feel about pay, to flexible working, equal opportunities, happiness and stress, and more. It was the first deep-dive of its kind in the Belgian communication industry. We invite you to explore the results on [this page](#).

In November 2021, ACC, UBA en UMA presented the results of a worldwide survey on DE&I in the marcom sector, initiated by the WFA. Discover the global and Belgian results [here](#).



3

How

How will we work on diversity,  
equity and inclusion?

We acknowledge that working on diversity, equity and inclusion requires effort on different levels: mindset, organization, and communication. We commit to this engagement as a sector, as an organization and as an individual.

3

1

We develop a mindset where we actively consider the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion.



Premise

1

## Working on DE&I is not limited to 'seeing everyone as equal'.

We recognize existing inequalities in society and look for measures to offer answers to these inequalities in our companies and communities. We never lose sight of these inequalities in our recruitment and promotion process, our culture, our services and products, the way we communicate, and everything else that we do. We want to provide everyone with the resources and opportunities they need to level the playing field and work on creating a safe and inclusive environment where everyone can grow and thrive.

### This requires:

- Recognizing that people are different, instead of ignoring differences.
- Recognizing existing inequalities and forms of oppression that mean that some people have more privilege and other people encounter more disadvantages.

Premise

2

## Existing norms, habits and procedures are often not inclusive to a diverse group of people.

We raise our awareness about existing norms, habits and procedures in our sector that can prevent the promotion of DE&I. We look for new ways of approaching these norms, habits, and procedures to take into account diverse needs and expectations and work towards a more inclusive sector.

### Definitions:

- Norms are rules or expectations that are socially enforced.  
E.g., the way we view our teams, the way we interpret 'creativity' and 'productivity'.
- Habits are routine behavior or repeated actions.  
E.g., how we celebrate winning a big contract or a pitch.
- Procedures are particular methods of doing something, of achieving a goal. E.g., our hiring practices.

Example: We can eliminate bias in our procedures such as the hiring, evaluation, and promotion process. In the hiring process this can be done by rewriting job descriptions, reviewing anonymous resumes, or setting quotas. In the evaluation and promotion process this can be done by evaluating the expectations that are set for employees and the way the evaluations or promotions are approached, or by looking at how your company communicates about evaluations and promotions, for example.

Premise

3

## Diversity is often seen as a challenge that needs 'to be overcome'.

We approach diversity not as a challenge but as a reality. We strive to optimize our sector so diversity can lead to enrichment and new opportunities.

Examples: Instead of thinking 'it is difficult to consider the needs of our Muslim colleagues', consider 'it is important to adapt our culture to each of our employees so that everyone belongs, and we can work together under optimal conditions'.

Premise

4

## There is still a lot of (unconscious) adversity towards talking about and working on DE&I.

We are open in our approach to DE&I. We remain vulnerable, engage in meaningful conversations, and don't hide behind defensiveness.

Tip: It is important to have conversations about DE&I, what makes us different and what brings us together. When talking to colleagues with different viewpoints, be open to learn and listen. Having a DE&I intermediary in your organization can help with having difficult conversations.

Premise

5

## Working on DE&I requires a lot of effort. People are afraid to make mistakes. This can lead to inaction.

We recognize that working on DE&I is not black and white and there is no one size fits all approach. It is a process and requires constant education and adjusting.

Tip: Stay focused on 'why' you want to work on DE&I to give you the motivation to act, even when you are afraid to make mistakes. Secondly, and more concretely, if you don't know where to start, or if you think your expertise is limited when it comes to DE&I, look for meaningful partnerships that can help you to get going.

### Some organizations you could contact:

- Teamspeler
- Studio Stoofpot
- Hands on Inclusion
- Defactum
- Allyens

Premise

6

## Taking small steps towards inclusion is helpful but not enough.

We recognize that the lack of diversity, equity and inclusion in our sector stems from structural issues, which cannot be solved through only symbolic actions that don't have a long-term impact. While we work on taking small steps, we never lose sight of the bigger picture either and we dare to take big steps as well.

The Belgian Creative Industry D&I Report offers many tips and easy quick wins for people and organizations to create inclusive, stimulating and energizing environments. Start to commit to at least one change to enable this great industry to grow.

Examples: A small step can involve being inclusive in the food and drinks you offer during team events. To make these small changes, talk to your employees to listen to their specific needs and expectations. Larger structural changes can be reshaping your hiring process or the way you communicate. Here, it is important that all levels of management are on board and aware of the reason for these changes.



3

2

We work on improving DE&I both on an organizational and sectoral level.



Premise

7

## Inclusion and accessibility are inextricably linked.

We aim to improve accessibility all around. Accessibility to the sector, accessibility to locations, accessibility of our communication, and so on.

Examples: Accessibility refers to many different things. For example, access to a building because there is an elevator or ramp, access to a product because the price is not too high, access to information by adding subtitles to a video or making sure a website is visually accessible.

Learn about different levels of accessibility [here](#)

Find more information about accessible communication [here](#)

Learn about web content accessibility [here](#)



Premise

8

## Having diverse teams can lead to better insights.

We strive for having diverse teams and we make sure our recruitment and promotion process reflects this goal.

Examples: When you organize an event specifically for women, it is useful and necessary to have women on your team. When you are creating a campaign about a Black hair care product, it is important to involve Black people in the creation of the campaign. More diversity in your team will lead to more knowledge and different experiences that can positively impact your work.

## Premise

9

## You can work on inclusion before you have diversity.

We simultaneously work on promoting both diversity and inclusion in our sector. We understand that we can work on inclusion before there is a lot of diversity. We don't wait to work on one before we have the other. E.g., working on inclusion can help you attract a more diverse workforce too.

Examples: You can start by working on inclusion, by creating a safe environment, by reshaping your hiring process, by making sure your communication is inclusive... This will lead to happier employees, satisfied customers and in turn can also make you a more attractive employer to a diverse group of possible hires. Don't forget to also put effort into working on diversity.

## Premise

10

## Not everyone will feel safe and welcomed in our sector.

We work on creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued, where everyone can be themselves and everyone gets involved. We create an open culture that encourages dialogue, understanding and respect for different cultural and social values. We stand against discrimination and do not tolerate any misconduct.

Examples: In Belgium, the marcom sector is still overwhelmingly white and male. Many young people work in the sector, but this is not usually reflected in management positions. The sector thrives on a 'work hard, play hard' vibe, where working overtime is not unusual. Many people working in the sector come across as being extraverted, or it certainly are the loudest voices that are being heard the most. It is therefore important that as a sector, and as individual companies, we create an open and inclusive environment where a large, diverse group of people will feel welcomed.

- At a sector level, this is about challenging these presumptions and putting forth the right role models.
- At a company level, we want to create an environment where everyone can participate and be heard. We encourage dialogue and open conversations. We have respect and accommodate different cultural and social values. To improve the working environment for all employees, it is important to frequently ask for feedback so employees can share what changes are meaningful and impactful for their wellbeing and productivity.

Premise

11

## People from minority groups often do not receive the same chances and growth opportunities.

We provide equitable growth opportunities and support for everyone.

Examples: Providing equitable growth opportunities can look like helping employees find these opportunities through having decent and personal communication and providing trainings, for example. It is also about removing existing barriers, setting up anti-discrimination policies that work, and systems that encourage inclusion instead of perpetuate discrimination.

## Premise

12

## Existing microaggressions in our sector prevent us from becoming inclusive.

We raise awareness about existing microaggressions and take on an active role to combat these microaggressions.

### Definition:

- **Microaggressions are forms of common everyday discrimination such as statements, actions or incidents that are usually subtle, indirect or unintentional, but that can still harm the person belonging to the marginalized group that the microaggression was addressed to.**

Examples and tips: Asking a Black woman to touch her hair. Telling someone with an ethnic background that 'they speak Dutch very well'. Saying that your Indian colleague's lunch 'looks' or 'smells weird.' Consider which microaggressions you, consciously or unconsciously have perpetuated in the past. Improving your knowledge of and sensitivity to different cultures can help you avoid saying insensitive things. Organize trainings to teach your teams how they can deal with a situation when a microaggression occurs. Create an open environment where employees feel safe to confront their colleagues in a constructive way when microaggressions occur. Make sure that people of minority groups do not bear the sole responsibility of having to call attention to and fixing existing microaggressions. As leadership, take responsibility and lead by example. If leadership is willing to step up by listening and also taking action, this can remove barriers for all employees.

## Premise 13

## We are not becoming inclusive in a bubble.

We involve our clients and partners in our process of becoming more inclusive and make sure they are on board with the changes we are making.

Examples: If you have been working with the same video production company for a long time, but you notice they are not willing to accommodate for an inclusive environment, try to talk to them. Talk about the importance of inclusion for your company and how you are implementing inclusion measures. See how you can continue working with your current partners or consider looking for new partners who share your values.





We incorporate the importance of DE&I in the way we communicate.



Premise

14

## Inclusive communication starts from knowledge and awareness about diversity and inclusion.

We constantly want to learn more about how we can make our communication more inclusive. If we don't have this expertise in house, we look for external partners and resources that can help us.

Examples: You can keep learning about DE&I and improving your insights by doing research and talking with others. A helpful tool is focus groups.

Premise 15

## Our target audience plays an important part in what we do.

We find it important to get involved with our target audience to make sure we can adapt and personalize our services to their specific needs and expectations.

Examples: Instead of 'talking about' certain (minority) groups and people, we let them speak for themselves. Nothing About Us Without Us is a common saying that reflects this idea that it is important to involve the community you want to represent to make sure the representation is authentic. For example, when you want to make a campaign about disability, involve people with a disability in the creation of the campaign.

## Premise

16

## Diverse target groups react positively to inclusive communication.

We learn about how we can make our language, visuals, and storytelling accessible and inclusive. We strive for authentic, positive, and realistic representations of the diversity that exist in society. We do this to connect with our audience in a meaningful way and to encourage positive feelings.

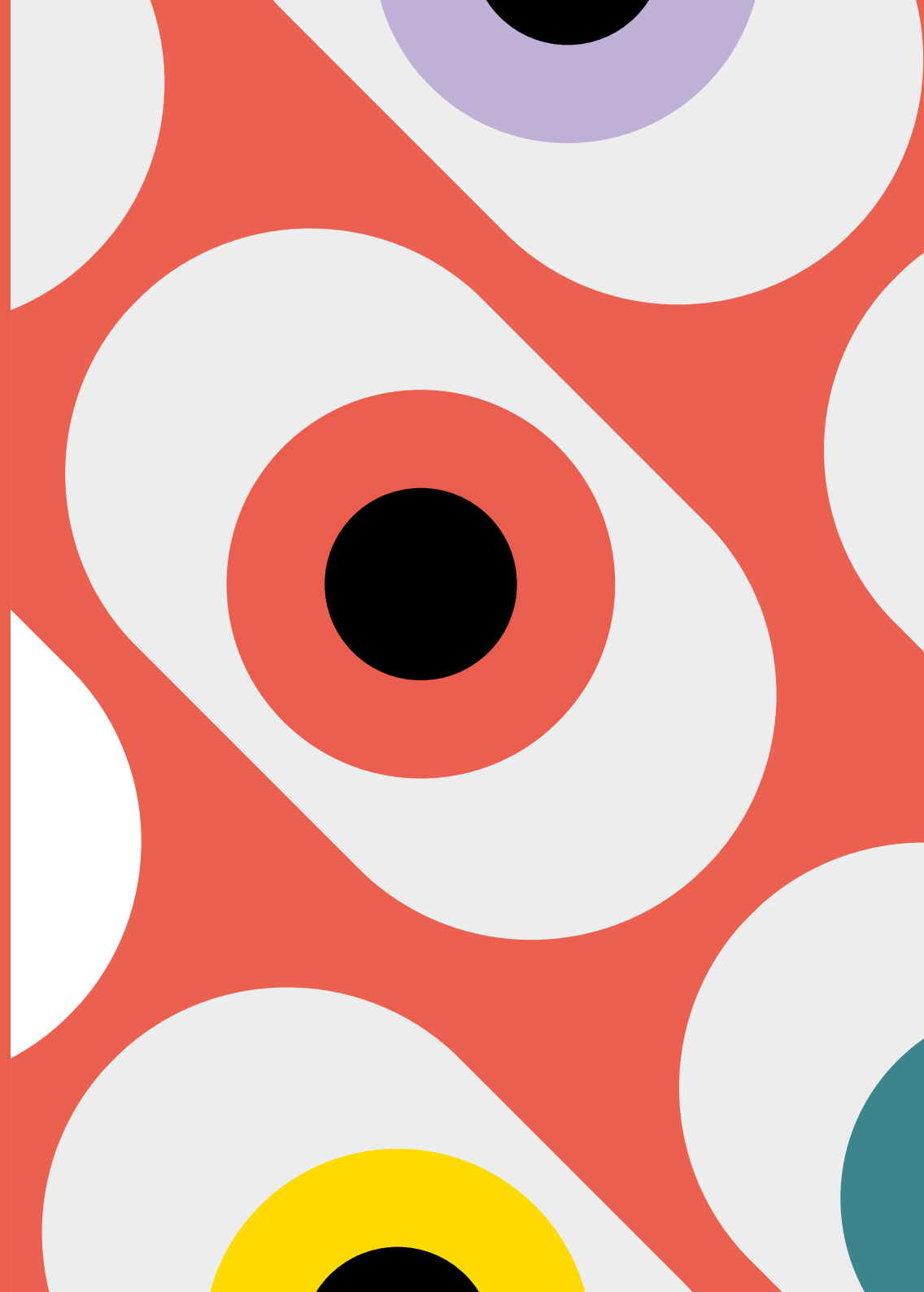
### Examples: How we can work on inclusive communication:

- When it comes to our language, we want to make sure it is clear and accessible, that everyone understands what we are saying. Avoiding specific jargon or figurative language can make our language more accessible to a wide range of people. By being gender-conscious with our language, we make sure we don't exclude anyone based on their gender. We also avoid using slurs or outdated terms that have negative connotations.
- In our visuals, we make sure the people represented in our images are diverse. We strive for authentic representation and avoid tokenism. When we add text to our visuals, we make sure this is legible by taking into account font, font size and color contrast, for example.
- In our storytelling we look for empowering ways of representing society, we disrupt existing norms and avoid stereotypes. We consider the different contexts our audience lives in and how certain representations may impact people, positively or negatively.

3

4

We find ways to track our progress to make sure we are becoming more inclusive.



## Premise

17

## We find ways to track our progress to make sure we are becoming more inclusive.

Examples: To measure diversity, you might need to be creative by doing anonymous surveys, asking employees if they voluntarily want to offer up this private information or asking different types of questions. Measuring inclusion is about tracking your process and analyzing which strategies work and which results you have reached from using certain strategies.

This can be done by, for example, talking with your employees or doing an employee wellbeing survey, talking with your clients about how they have experienced the changes in your company, or doing focus groups with customers to measure whether they have experienced any changes in your communication.

List of **important**

**terminology**

## Diversity

The fact that people differ from one another on multiple dimensions and in different contexts. Experiences, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social status, disability, education, and family status are a few examples.

## Equity

Equity recognizes that each person has a different starting point and allocates the personalized attention, resources and opportunities needed to reach a level playing field.

## Inclusion

Continuously and actively working on a culture, an environment or a system that is accessible to or includes everyone.

## Accessibility

Accessibility is about making sure that everyone has access to locations, information and services. This is not just about physical accessibility but also financial and social accessibility. Learn more about accessibility, [here](#)

## Inequality

Inequality refers to a situation in which unequal resources or opportunities are given to certain groups within a society. A lot of inequalities have existed for a long time and are still felt today, for example, in the opportunities young people with different backgrounds receive or in the representation we do and don't see in media and advertising.

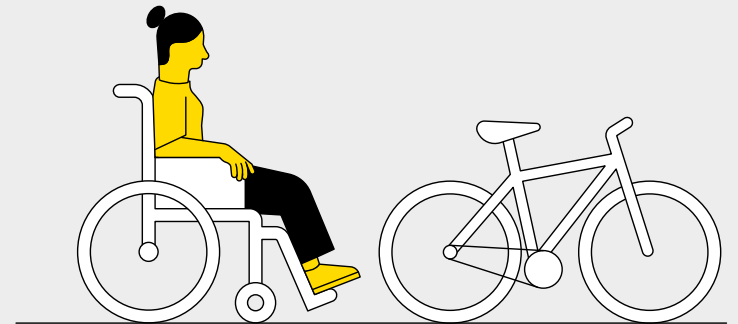


# Equality

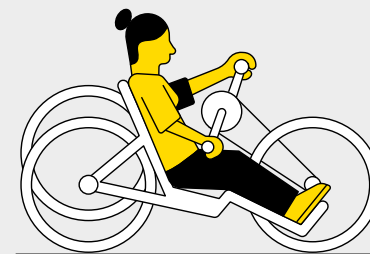
Equality refers to treating everyone the same regardless of their background or identity. With equality, you give everyone the same opportunities, tools or, in this case, bikes. With equity, you give everyone opportunities, tools or bikes adapted to their needs. Equity strives to remove existing barriers and inequalities.

Here is a visual to highlight the difference between equality and equity:

## Equality



## Equity



## Belonging

Belonging refers to feeling welcomed, appreciated, accepted and respected. You can completely be yourself and feel comfortable to participate. Belonging is usually a result of actively working on inclusion.

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a way of looking at identity and structural inequality where you acknowledge that these are multifaceted and interconnected. For example, it is about acknowledging how a Black woman will experience sexism and racism differently from a white woman or a Black man. Intersectionality recognizes that structures of inequality such as sexism and racism influence and strengthen each other. Learn more about intersectionality [here](#)

## Microaggressions

Microaggressions are forms of common everyday discrimination such as statements, actions or incidents that are usually subtle, indirect or unintentional, but that can still harm the person belonging to the marginalized group that the microaggression was addressed to.

## Tokenism

Tokenism refers to only symbolically or superficially adding diversity to avoid criticism. It can happen when you add diversity but don't think about inclusion. For example, tokenism can occur in an advertisement when you add diversity to 'seem diverse' or it can happen in a boardroom when one person of color among all white people is supposed to 'represent diversity'.

# A word from the participating federations



We believe in 'creativity for all', which is why ACC, BAM, Creative Belgium, UBA and UMA commit to work on improving diversity, equity and inclusion in the Belgian marcom sector and to shape a happy and equal industry for everyone.

Since we generate a great part of the media content that people consume on a daily basis, we also have a societal responsibility and we should be mindful of new DE&I standards; not only on our workforce but also in our marcom messages.

This is a great time to start preparing your company for the future with a strong and genuine understanding of what's happening now. The engagements in these guidelines will bring you some quick wins and we believe the insights will have a profound impact on shaping your future.

We hope that you will read these guidelines and engage to work on all 16 premises, step by step. Starting with at least one change to enable our great industry to grow, is already a beginning.. as long as you keep your eyes open for everyone.

All associations (ACC, BAM, Creative Belgium, UBA and UMA) are here to help you find and navigate opportunities.



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