

# *Guidelines for a* **GENDER-SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION**

**GEMIS**  
**Promoting gender equality  
for a more inclusive society**





Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union



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# Table of Contents

01

## **GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE IN THE ADMINISTRATION**

- 1.1 Tips for gender-sensitive language
- 1.2 Tips for email communication

02

## **GENDER-NEUTRAL IMAGES IN COMMUNICATION AND ADVERTISING: DO'S AND DON'TS**

- 2.1. Domestic violence
- 2.2. Sexual harassment
- 2.3. Compatibility of family and work
- 2.4. Divorce
- 2.5. Compatibility of work and care
- 2.6. Forced Marriage

03

## **ADVERTISEMENTS**

# The project in short



## ACRONYM

**GEMIS**

## TITLE

Promoting gender equality for a more inclusive society

## FUNDING PROGRAMME

EUROPE FOR CITIZENS

## LENGTH

2021-2023

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the project was to contribute to the promotion of gender equality and social inclusion of women in the European society.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives were:

1. *to raise awareness among decision makers, civil servants and citizens on existing gender inequalities and on how to accelerate the process towards gender equality;*
2. *to exchange good practices on promoting a gender responsive governance;*
3. *to promote a gender inclusive language against gender stereotypes.*

## LEAD PARTNER

Municipality of Norrköping (SE)

## OTHER PARTNERS

Sweden Emilia Romagna Network - SERN (IT), Municipality of Parma (IT), Municipality of Piotrkow Trybunalski (PL), Municipality of Esslingen am Neckar (DE), Municipality of Santo Tirso (PT), Municipality of Vienne (FR), Gender studies, o.p.s. (CZ).

## WEBSITE

[www.gemis-project.eu](http://www.gemis-project.eu)



**Dear Reader,**

*With the EU project "Gender Equality for a More Inclusive Society" (GEMIS), municipalities and institutions from a total of seven European countries have set themselves the goal of giving more attention to the topic of equality. Because, as the participants of the project agree, only when we achieve real equality in politics, administration and society will we have achieved an inclusive society. During various seminars and meetings, the project partners exchanged ideas with administrative staff, politicians and local actors, shared their experiences and collected ideas that contribute to more equality. The handbook offers many practical examples that can be implemented quickly and easily in everyday work and in politics. The guidelines complement these recommendations for action and are also aimed at all those who work with the topic of equality in their everyday professional life or in their political office. The focus is on language and communication.*

*For example, the first chapter deals with the issue of gender-equitable language in administration, while the second chapter addresses the language and power of images. The last chapter shows how images in advertising can influence the issue of gender equality.*

*The examples and recommendations given in this document are based on the exchange and experiences of GEMIS participants between 2021 and 2022. As the Corona pandemic has shown, old stereotypes and role models have been increasingly displayed again in some cases. On the other hand, the discussion has gained a lot of attention since 2020, so that these guidelines represent a snapshot and should be continuously adapted in the coming years. Furthermore, this document mainly contains examples from Italy and Germany. However, these can be transferred to all other EU countries and serve only as an illustration.*

## 01

**GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE IN THE ADMINISTRATION**

Many administrations have introduced guidelines in recent years to promote and establish the use of gender-responsive language. The cities of Parma, Italy and Norrköping, Sweden serve as a good example. The guides can be found at these links: [Parma Municipality](#) and [Norrköping Municipality](#).

Dr Kristina Bedijs gave a presentation on inclusive language in different countries as part of the GEMIS project. You can find the presentation on the lecture under this [link](#).

Gender-equitable language affects many areas of an administration. Therefore, you should consider who from your administration has to deal with language. These are mainly the departments that communicate internally and externally, such as the communication department, the public order office, the top management of the administration, etc.

All languages change and evolve under the action of many internal and external factors, and among these are also the political and social changes, of international scope, relating to the status of women and their role in society, to the elaboration of policies to valorise the difference between

men and women, to the introduction and reflection on the concept of gender.

## 1.1 Tips for gender-sensitive language

In the 2000s thanks to the introduction in Italy of the concept of gender, developed in the USA: with 'gender' we mean the set of socio-cultural characteristics that are accompanied by membership of one or the other sex. To obtain equal rights between men and women it was no longer necessary to erase the differences between men and women and make woman "equal" to man, but, on the contrary, it was necessary to recognize gender differences and to engage in the construction of gender identity. And since from the point of the importance in the society, of the working and institutional positions occupied, of the recognition of rights, the balance hung heavily on the male side, it was necessary to rebalance it by valuing the female gender, which was heavily discriminated against. Language was immediately recognized as having a power in this process: it was first necessary to begin to affirm the presence of women through a use of language that made them "visible" in order to then be able to recognize the differences of gender. Linguistic habits that had never been much considered such as the use of male terms in reference to women or negative stereotypes, took on a "sexist" meaning: women had to be recognized through the use of the female gender.

Alma Sabatini's work, *Il sessismo nella lingua italiana* (Sexism in the Italian Language), promoted by the National Commission for the Realization of Equality between Men and Women and by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, which referred to the program of government presented to the Chamber of Deputies on August 9, 1983 by then Prime Minister Bettino Craxi. Object of analysis of Sabatini's work is to denounce that "the Italian language, like many others, is based on an androcentric principle: man is the parameter around which the linguistic universe revolves and is organized" (A. Sabatini 1987: 24) and that just the grammatical and semantic dissymmetries that punctuate the language make it, in the general unawareness of the speaker, "sexist".

In the third chapter, *Recommendations for a non-sexist use of the Italian language*, and on individual sexist uses that focused the attention of the public:

### GRAMMATICAL DISSYMMETRIES

- Unmarked masculine (use of man with generic value), e.g., *rapporto uomo-macchina* - man-machine relationship
- masculine inclusive, e.g., *gli studenti entrino uno alla volta* - students enter one at a time
- masculine concordance, e.g., scholarly girls and boys are always rewarded
- use of the masculine for professional titles and institutional roles prestigious, e.g., *il ministro* - Minister Fornero went to the classroom
- use of the suffix -essa, e.g., *la presidentessa* - the president of the Iride association

## SEMANTIC DISSYMMETRIES

- Stereotypes: adjectives, e.g., mawkish, naive, selfless, fragile, meet, hysterical and diminutives, e.g., mommy, wifey, starlet
- semantic polarization, e.g., free man vs. free woman, housekeeper man vs. housekeeper woman
- identification of woman through man or profession, e.g., Prof. Baldini and Mrs., wife of, woman of

## 1.2 Tips for Email Communication

During email correspondence with your community, whether that be with citizens, employees, colleagues or customers etc., it is important to use the correct address. However, it is not always possible to know how to address someone if you have not previously been in contact.

The Department for Equal Opportunities at the City of Stuttgart includes the following sentence at the bottom of their emails to ensure that everyone feels appropriately addressed:

*Wir wollen Sie respektvoll ansprechen. Gerne können Sie uns mitteilen, wenn Sie eine andere Ansprache wünschen.*

This means: "We want to address you respectfully. You are welcome to let us know if you would like to be addressed differently". By openly encouraging the recipient of the email to respond if they would prefer to be addressed in a different way (for example with "Mrs." instead of "Mr." or the informal "you"-form "Du" in German as opposed to the formal "Sie") the City of Stuttgart creates an understanding environment and ensures respectful correspondence with all email recipients.

## 02 GENDER-NEUTRAL IMAGES IN COMMUNICATION AND ADVERTISING: DO'S AND DON'TS

Images for flyers and posters used for public relations in the field of gender equality should be chosen sensitively. Images convey realities, ascribe roles. In the process of perception, the recourse to pre-existing cognitive schemes plays a decisive role. The US-American publicist Walter Lippmann called these patterns of thought stereotypes in reference to Printer Command Language. He also spoke of "images in our heads" that decisively determine our perception: *"We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, deeply govern the whole process of perception."*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion. With a New Introduction by Michael Curtis, New Brunswick-London 19982 (1922), p. 3, p. 90.)

Gender stereotypes are based on the categorisation according to gender (mostly two genders, namely "female" and "male") and sexual orientation as well as the repeated attribution of more or less positive characteristics based on the categorisation.

Stereotyping perpetuates and reinforces patriarchal role models. Gender-neutral images, on the other hand, do not force any gender into a role or reflect power relations. This enables a neutral view of the image and (old) role models are not reproduced. For this reason, it is very important to design images free of discrimination and stereotypes. When selecting people, intersectionality must be taken into account.

## 2.1 Domestic violence

**DOS**

### **CAMPAIGN: "SEXUAL VIOLENCE LEAVES TRACES"**

SOURCE: KREIS ESSLINGEN / STADT ESSLINGEN AM NECKAR (ESSLINGEN DISTRICT AND CITY)



This is a good example of a non-stereotyping image, as no gender attribution is possible. Here, attention is drawn to the fact that if you have experienced sexualised violence, you can get medical care and have evidence secured which would stand up in court without having to decide immediately to press charges. Sexualised violence often takes place in a social environment - the decision to press charges is therefore often difficult for those affected. The flyer is conspicuous because no person is shown.

## FLYER: "ADVICE AND HELP: DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE"

SOURCE: STADT ESSLINGEN AM NECKAR / FRAUEN HELFEN FRAUEN ESSLINGEN E.V.

**Beratung und Hilfe**  
Bei häuslicher und sexualisierter Gewalt

Kreisdiakonieverband im Landkreis Esslingen  
**DIAKONISCHES BERATUNGSZENTRUM**  
☎ 0711 342157 - 100  
[www.kreisdiakonie-esslingen.de](http://www.kreisdiakonie-esslingen.de)  
Im Diakonischen Beratungszentrum gibt es unterschiedliche Beratungsstellen:  
Psychologische Beratung, Anlaufstelle Esslingen, Schwangerschafts- und Schwangerschaftskonfliktberatung (staatlich anerkannt).

Hilfe und Beratung für junge Migrantinnen in Konfliktsituationen  
**BERATUNGSSTELLE YASEMIN**  
☎ 0711 6586 9526  
[www.eva-stuttgart.de/mj/unsere-angebote/angebote/beratungsstelle-yasemin](http://www.eva-stuttgart.de/mj/unsere-angebote/angebote/beratungsstelle-yasemin)  
YASEMIN ist eine Beratungsstelle in Stuttgart für junge Migrantinnen zwischen 12 und 27 Jahren, die Schwierigkeiten mit ihrer Familie, mit ihren Verwandten und mit ihrem sozialen Umfeld haben. Die Mädchen und jungen Frauen befinden sich in einer Konfliktsituation. Die Ursache liegt im traditionellen und kulturellen Hintergrund ihrer Familie. Sie sind von sogenannter Gewalt im Namen der Ehre, von Zwangsverheiratung und/oder weiblicher Genitalbeschneidung/verstümmelung bedroht oder betroffen. Die Beratungsstelle YASEMIN unterstützt die jungen Frauen - und auch vertraute Dritte, wie zum Beispiel Freundinnen oder Lehrerinnen.

**Bundesweite Hilfefunktionen**  
(kostenfrei und auf Wunsch anonym)

**HILFETELEFON „GEWALT GEGEN FRAUEN“**  
☎ 0800 - 0116016  
[www.hilfetelefon.de](http://www.hilfetelefon.de)  
Das Beratungsangebot umfasst alle Formen von Gewalt gegen Frauen, insbesondere Gewalt in Ehe und Partnerschaft, sexuelle Übergriffe und Vergewaltigung, sexuelle Belästigung sowie Stalking, Zwangsverheiratung, Menschenhandel und Zwangsprostitution. Das Angebot wendet sich an von Gewalt betroffene Frauen, das soziale Umfeld der Frauen sowie an Personen, die bei ihrer Tätigkeit mit der Beratung und Unterstützung von Frauen befasst sind. Das Hilfefunktion „Gewalt gegen Frauen“ erreichen Sie rund um die Uhr. Das Angebot ist mehrsprachig. Online-Beratung ist möglich.

**HILFETELEFON SEXUELLER MISSBRAUCH**  
☎ 0800 2255 530  
[www.anrufen-hilft.de](http://www.anrufen-hilft.de)  
Das Hilfefunktion Sexueller Missbrauch ist Anlaufstelle für Betroffene von sexueller Gewalt, für Angehörige sowie Personen aus dem sozialen Umfeld von Kindern, Menschen, die Entlastung, Beratung und Unterstützung suchen, die sich um ein Kind sorgen, die einen Verdacht oder ein „körniges Gefühl“ haben, die unsicher sind und Fragen zum Thema stellen möchten, können anrufen.  
Online-Beratung: [www.save-me-online.de](http://www.save-me-online.de)

**HILFETELEFON SCHWANGERE IN NOT**  
☎ 0800 - 4040 020  
[www.geburt-vertraulich.de](http://www.geburt-vertraulich.de)  
Das Hilfefunktion soll sicherstellen, dass schwangere Frauen in Konfliktsituationen jederzeit und uneingeschränkt eine kompetente Ansprechpartnerin haben. Das Hilfefunktion hat eine mehrsprachige Lotsenfunktion und ermöglicht einen niedrigschwelligen Zugang zum professionellen Beratungssystem.

Hilfe für Kinder und Jugendliche  
**NUMMER GEGEN KUMMER**  
☎ 116 111  
(kostenfrei von Handy und Festnetz)  
[www.nummergegenkummer.de](http://www.nummergegenkummer.de)  
Gibt es etwas, das Dich aus dem Gleichgewicht bringt? Etwas, das Dich unglaublich macht und Dich denken lässt: „Ich weiß nicht mehr weiter.“ Wir von der „Nummer gegen Kummer“ stehen Dir zur Seite und sprechen mit Dir darüber. Dabei ist es egal, was Dich gerade bedrückt.

**ELTERNTELEFON**  
☎ 0800 1110550  
Wenn Sie sich Sorgen um Ihr Kind machen, sich überfordert oder manchmal sogar hilflos fühlen, sind wir für Sie da.  
Die Website der Initiative #Stärker als Gewalt bündelt bestehende Hilfsangebote für gewaltbetroffene Frauen und Männer und zeigt praktische Maßnahmen sowie Wege zur Unterstützung und Hilfe auf, auch in Leichter Sprache:  
[www.staerker-als-gewalt.de](http://www.staerker-als-gewalt.de)

STADT ESSLINGEN AM NECKAR  
Referat für Chancengleichheit  
Rathausplatz 2  
73728 Esslingen am Neckar  
[www.esslingen.de/chancengleichheit](http://www.esslingen.de/chancengleichheit)  
Kontakt:  
Barbara Straub  
Tel. 0711 3512-2993  
Diesen Flyer finden Sie auch auf unserer Website.

**Beratung und Hilfe**  
Bei häuslicher und sexualisierter Gewalt  
Adressen und Anlaufstellen des Hilfesystems

The flyer depicts various counselling centres and helplines if one is affected by domestic and sexualised violence. Since approx. 80% women are affected by domestic violence, the figures justify the use of a photo of a woman.

## “HELP! LOOK. ACT. HELP. AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.”

SOURCE: KREIS BORKEN, NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN

**HILFE!**

**HINSEHEN!  
HANDELN!  
HILFE!  
GEGEN  
HÄUSLICHE  
GEWALT.**

In the picture, the gender of the victim is not depicted. The hands are not clearly assigned to a gender. It is a good example of non-stereotyping.

## FLYER: "DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT OK!"

SOURCE: LANDESHAUPTSTADT STUTTGART

### Häusliche Gewalt ist NICHT ok!

- Der Flyer soll für alle Menschen leicht verständlich sein, deshalb enthält er wenig Text und viele Bilder.

#### ■ Worum geht es in diesem Heft?

In diesem Heft geht es um Gewalt in der Ehe und in Beziehungen.

Manchmal sind Frauen Opfer von Gewalt.  
Manchmal sind Männer Opfer von Gewalt.



Manchmal sind Männer die Täter, zum Beispiel wenn ein Mann seine Ehefrau bedroht oder schlägt.



Manchmal sind Frauen die Täterinnen, zum Beispiel wenn eine Frau ihren Ehemann bedroht oder schlägt.



1

The flyer is written in simple language and describes both women and men as victims of violence.

A positive aspect here is the diverse portrayal of women.

**IMPORTANT: FLYERS IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE ARE AN IMPORTANT SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH LIMITED COGNITIVE ABILITIES AND FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIMITED LANGUAGE SKILLS.**

## 2.2 Sexual harassment

DOS

### FLYER: 'NO MEANS NO!' SEXUAL HARRASSMENT: BREAKING THE TABOO THROUGH INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

SOURCE: LMU - LUDWIG MAXIMILIAN UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH



## 2.3 Compatibility of family and work

DOS

### FLYER DEPICTS MEN AND WOMEN AS RESPONSIBLE FOR CARE, HOUSEWORK AND HOLDING DOWN A CAREER.

SOURCE: DEUTSCHER GEWERKSCHAFTSBUND (GERMAN FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS)



The picture is a good example of the compatibility of family and work. Both the woman and the man take on care work and are gainfully employed.

## FLYER: COMPATIBILITY OF JOB, CAREER AND FAMILY AT THE CITY ADMINISTRATION HEIDELBERG

SOURCE: STADT HEIDELBERG



The flyer is well done on the topic of the compatibility of work, career and family because no people are depicted here. This way, no gender is attributed to being responsible for family and career.

Vereinbarkeit von Beruf, Karriere und Familie  
bei der Stadtverwaltung Heidelberg

Fünfter Bericht zur Umsetzung der Dienstvereinbarung  
zur Förderung der Gleichstellung  
von Frauen und Männern  
und  
Ergebnisse einer schriftlichen Befragung  
von Ämtern und anderen Einrichtungen  
des öffentlichen Dienstes in Heidelberg.

## FLYER: "IF NOT NOW, WHEN?" PROFESSIONAL RE-ENTRY - FOR WOMEN WITH AND WITHOUT MIGRATION HISTORY."

SOURCE: STADT ESSLINGEN AM NECKAR

**Wann, wenn nicht jetzt?!**  
Beruflicher Wiedereinstieg - für Frauen mit und ohne Migrationsgeschichte

Ein Vormittag  
mit Informationen, Impulsen und Netzwerken  
Die Teilnahme ist kostenfrei

Dienstag, 28. Juni 2022  
8.30 bis 12.30 Uhr  
vhs Esslingen, Mettinger Straße 125  
Esslingen am Neckar  
[www.esslingen.de/frau-beruf](http://www.esslingen.de/frau-beruf)

**Beruflicher Wiedereinstieg und Umstieg**  
Diese Veranstaltung richtet sich an Frauen mit und ohne Migrationsgeschichte, die beruflich wiedereinstiegen, sich verändern oder sich weiterentwickeln wollen.

**Programme**

- 8.30 Uhr: Ankommen
- 8.45 Uhr: Begrüßung
- 9.00 Uhr: Podiumsgespräch: „Arbeit und Kinder - wie geht das?“
- 9.15 Uhr: „Wie bewerbe ich mich richtig?“ oder „Die eigene Chefin werden - wie mache ich das?“
- 9.45 Uhr: „Welche Angebote und Hilfen bekomme ich vom JCI“ oder „Input: Stärken & Ziele“
- 10.15 Uhr: Zeit für Messestände
- 11.15 Uhr: „Mentoring-Projekt“ oder „Input: Stärken & Ziele“
- 11.45 Uhr: Zeit für Messestände

Unterschiedliche Institutionen präsentieren sich an Informationsständen. Zusätzlich gibt es Angebote wie Bewerbungsmappencheck und Anerkennungsberatung.

**Veranstalterinnen**

- Bundesagentur für Arbeit  
Agentur für Arbeit Esslingen
- Landkreis Esslingen
- BeFF  
Berufliche Förderung Esslingen am Neckar
- Stadt Esslingen am Neckar
- Netzwerk  
Fortbildung  
Regionalliga
- vhs  
Volkshochschule Esslingen am Neckar

© Regionalliga ES

Women with and without a migration background who want to start or develop their careers after a break due to care work can participate in this event.

The event on re-entry takes place annually and, apart from the subtitle, the flyer remains the same which is a good opportunity for recognition!

## DON'TS

### FLYER: "TIME FOR PERSPECTIVES: SUPPORT IN THE HOUSEHOLD FROM PROFESSIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS"

SOURCE: BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR FAMILIE, SENIOREN, FRAUEN UND JUGEND



This flyer provides information about the compatibility of work and care with the help of household-related services. It is problematic in this illustration that only a woman is depicted in the context of compatibility of family and work. This pushes the woman into the role of being responsible for the care work.

### FLYER: "FOR COMPATIBILITY OF FAMILY AND CAREER: THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR BUSINESSES IN THE MEO-REGION"

SOURCE: MÜLHEIMER BÜNDNIS FÜR FAMILIE, ESSENER BÜNDNIS FÜR FAMILIE, OBERHAUSENER BÜNDNIS FÜR FAMILIE



The flyer is problematic on the one hand because it shows a very sexist portrayal of women and on the other hand because it only shows a woman on the topic of compatibility of family and work.

## 24 Divorce

DOS

**PHOTO USED FOR A FLYER ADVERTISING A WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP FOR WOMEN GOING THROUGH A SEPARATION.**

SOURCE: STADT ESSLINGEN AM NECKAR



A neutral photo which does not depict gender stereotypes.

## 25 Compatibility of work and care

DOS

**FLYER: CARE GUIDE - EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CARE**

SOURCE: BÜNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESUNDHEIT (FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH)



Care work is more often attributed to women. As the flyer does not depict a caring woman, but is kept gender neutral, this flyer is a good example.

## DON'TS

### IMAGE DEPICTING A WOMAN CARING FOR AN ELDERLY MAN.

SOURCE: VEREINIGTE LOHNSTEUERHILFE / VLS.DE



In this image, the carer is wearing a purple dress and is thus seen as a woman. This is problematic as it supports the idea that care work is a woman's job.

## 2.6 Forced Marriage

### DOS

### NEUTRAL IMAGE OF A PADLOCK AND TWO WEDDING RINGS TO REPRESENT A FORCED MARRIAGE.

SOURCE: SOURCE: BERLIN.DE



The picture is very neutral on the subject of forced marriage, as no people are depicted. Forced marriage can be traumatising for women and men.

## ADVERTISEMENT

Advertising plays with images to influence people. The choice of images is important: neither sexist nor racist images, nor images that reproduce stereotypes should be used to promote products or events.

Municipalities often have their own advertising space and can therefore influence what advertising can be shown. Transparent criteria that clarify how images are judged are helpful.

In Germany, there is the German Advertising Council (Deutscher Werberat), which can be contacted in case of controversial issues. [www.werberat.de](http://www.werberat.de)

### DOS

#### FLYER: E.ON GREEN POWER AND WALL CHARGING POINT

SOURCE: E.ON ENERGY COMPANY



The picture does not show the people in their stereotypical roles, as the woman is responsible for loading the car and the man has the child on his lap.

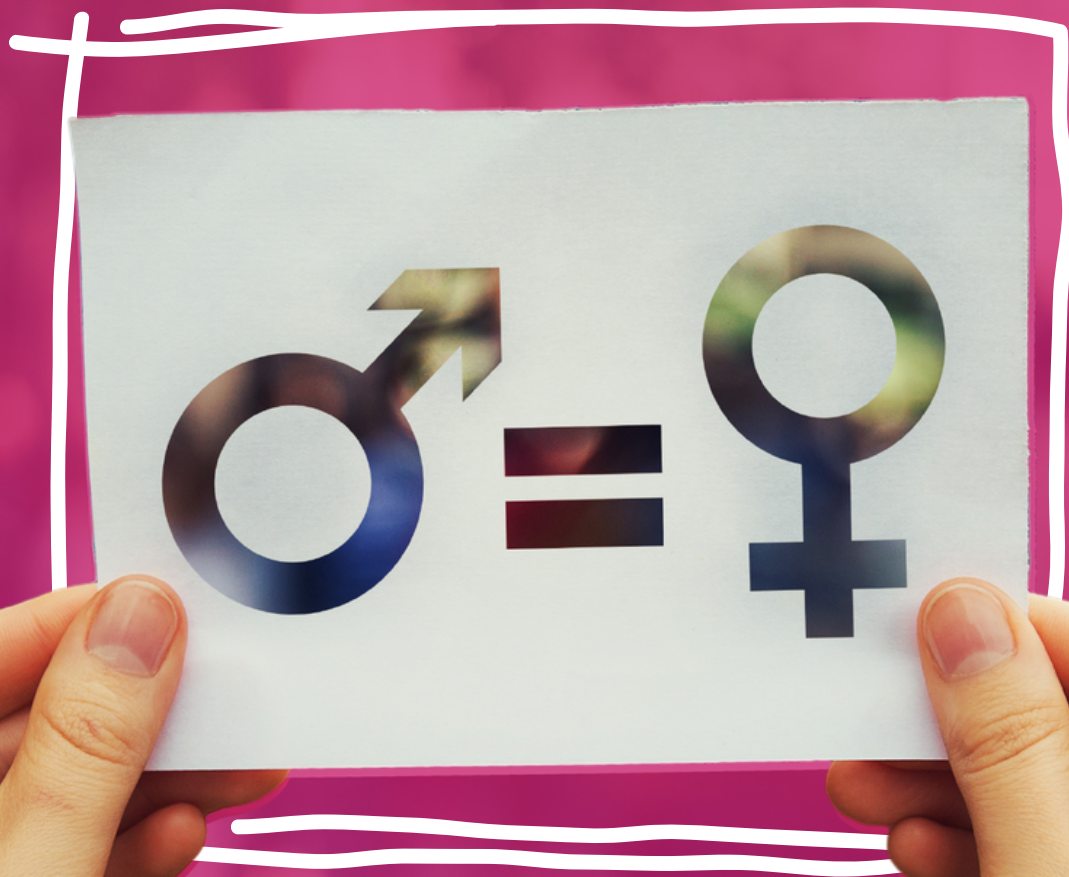
#### ADVERTISEMENT FOR MICRO PLASTIC FILTERS FOR WASHING MACHINES FROM GRUNDIG: "WASHING WITHOUT A GUILTY CONSCIENCE"

SOURCE: GRUNDIG, 2022. WÄSCHE OHNE SCHLECHTES GEWISSEN. BRIGITTE, BE GREEN, FEBRUARY, P. 49.

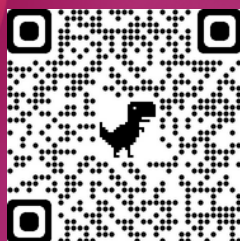


In this image the man is doing the laundry and not the woman, as is so often depicted in advertisements.

*The exchange and experience gained during the GEMIS project have shown how important it is to draw more attention to the issue of gender equality. As the handbook and the guidelines make clear, there are many different approaches and ideas. GEMIS has also shown that many other projects and exchange formats are needed so that European municipalities, politicians, citizens and initiatives can learn from each other, exchange strategies and further develop ideas, e.g. in the areas of sexualised violence, the gender pay gap or compatibility of work and family life, to name just a few of many examples. Thus, the project is a good start for many more joint European projects which should share the common goal of achieving an equal society.*



[www.gemis-project.eu](http://www.gemis-project.eu)



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