



YILDIZ ★ HOLDING  
WOMEN'S  
PLATFORM

# A GUIDE TO ESTABLISHING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY THROUGH COMMUNICATION



# Foreword

At **Yıldız Holding** we support a corporate culture that treats everyone equally without prejudice, and that seeks equality for opportunity for of a better future.

Hence, we see empowering women and ensuring that procedural justice exists in the business world as our responsibility.

The goal of Yıldız Holding's vision of "investing in people" is to create opportunities for society by investing in people in all our companies in different countries, to position ourselves as one of the world's most desired places of work, and to empower women by giving them the best opportunities we can.

Therefore, we've launched the Yıldız Holding Women's Platform across all our companies to strengthen our culture of equal opportunity and make it permanent.

The activities of this Platform will proceed along 3 axes: communication, the business environment, and cooperation, and we value participation, equality, and diversity in all our business practices.

We reflect our position on equal opportunity in the way we communicate, and seek to build a corporate culture that is inclusive and free of bias.

We've created a business environment where all of our employees work in fair and safe conditions.



We cooperate effectively with NGOs and government institutions, so that we can empower women both economically and socially.

In order to for us to foster a corporate culture that respects diversity, we have to communicate in a language free of stereotypes. How we choose words and express ourselves have a major impact on creating an inclusive culture. Therefore, it is essential that we connect with others – both individually and institutionally – in a way that is free of and that does not reinforce prejudice.

In line with these goals, we've assembled a guide for the benefit of all our employees on how to use communication to establish social equality: **A Guide to Establishing Equal Opportunity Through Communication**. We feel that this guide will help establish a fair and safe working environment for everyone, regardless of their gender. We also hope that it will make everyone feel more at ease and happy which is part of our company's mission.

\*This document sets out the general principles on equal opportunity in Yıldız Holding and is binding on companies that carry out their operations and are incorporated in Turkey. Whilst this document is not binding on other companies operating globally under the umbrella of Yıldız Holding, they are encouraged if required to update their codes of conduct by taking this content as a guideline, adapted or abridged to reflect local requirements in relation to the promotion of equality and inclusion.

# Chapter 1

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL SEX AND GENDER

Our choice of words and the way we express ourselves can reinforce social inequality by reinforcing assumptions about accepted societal values and prescribed gender roles – including pre-conceived notions about what women and men can and cannot do. However, language also has the potential to break such stereotypes and foster equal opportunity.

**Biological sex** is innate. It is not learned, it is universal. It refers to the genetic makeup that human beings are born with.

**Gender**, on the other hand, is neither innate nor universal, and can be shaped by culture, socio-economic factors, and education over time. Gender assumptions attribute different duties and responsibilities to women and men, which leads people to harbour different expectations and beliefs about each regarding their capabilities and behaviour. However, societal shifts can take place, changing how such duties and responsibilities get assigned.

**For example:**

- x Women cannot be good managers.
- x Women are emotional, whereas men make decisions that are more sensible.



**Gender-based divisions of labour** can cause people to associate certain professions and jobs with either gender, based on assumptions they have about what women and men can or should do.

**For example:**

- x Women are more suitable to work as nurses, teachers, or dieticians, or in sales.
- x Men make better engineers and scientists/technology experts.

**Equal opportunity** means that all individuals have equal rights and the right to equal opportunities regardless of their gender. It also means that they have the equal right to hone their own knowledge and skill sets. Social equality of opportunity does not mean the sexes are the same. Rather, it indicates the need for “processes” that take into account the different needs and expectations of women and men to make them equal.

In order to establish **social equality**, when women are at a disadvantage, additional steps need to be taken to make up for that disadvantage to put them on an equal footing (i.e. positive discrimination). When the disadvantage no longer exists, the positive discrimination comes to an end.

# Chapter 2

## IMPORTANT TERMS FOR ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY THROUGH COMMUNICATION

**Sexist language:** Sexist language reflects the opinion that one gender is superior to the other. This can consciously or subconsciously reveal itself when the person using sexist language identifies women with traditional or expected roles, or excludes them from their circle of communication altogether.

**Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes generalize women and men and impose a range of assumed traits on them. They typically take two forms. (1) Assuming that all members of a given profession are of the same sex.

**For example,**

x All company executives are men, and all assistants need to be women.

(2) Assuming that all members of a given gender share the same traits.

**For example,**

x All women like to shop, and men don't cry.



**Gender sensitive language:** Gender sensitive language seeks to transform the discriminatory language used in people's social lives and in business into one that is sensitive to equality of opportunity.

**Gender sensitive language:**

- Leads people to question their assumptions about gender roles in society
- Allows people to more easily identify sexist phrases/idioms in their language
- Makes people more comfortable with acting outside the standards set for their gender in society, and reduces the pressure on them.

# Chapter 3

## GENDER STEREOTYPES

Over time, stereotypes common to society limit the potential of women and men, and create one type for each of them. They are reflected in the language we speak and how we communicate - manifesting themselves through comments on character, physical traits, roles, and professions, among other things. It's possible to examine such stereotypes in three broad groups: positioning, visual media, and language/style.

### a. Positioning

Stereotypes relate certain genders with certain titles and roles, and position them as such through communication. For example, society tends to position women as homemakers, and men as breadwinners. Brands can adopt these stereotypes and develop their marketing strategies around them -unwittingly reinforcing the link between certain products and services and specific genders.

#### Examples:

- ✗ Positioning women in cooking and cleaning roles while men are shown working at their jobs outside the home
- ✗ Portraying men as company managers, and women as their assistants
- ✗ Attributing women as being the sole caretakers of their children

### b. Visual media

In many instances, visual media can reinforce gender stereotypes. This can include visual materials portraying individuals carrying out traditional roles, or exploiting them as sexual objects. Visual angles, clothing/costumes, and how characters are employed in visuals can also reinforce sexism. All visual media should avoid gender stereotypes and visuals should be diversified.

#### Examples:

- ✗ Portraying business meetings with mostly men in attendance
- ✗ Showing male bosses sitting at their desks, while women remain standing
- ✗ Depicting men as strong and women as delicate, passive individuals who constantly seek approval for their actions

# Chapter 3

## GENDER STEREOTYPES

### c. Language/Style

Turkish is a gender-neutral language. This is in contrast to most Indo-European languages such as English, German, French, and Spanish, which separate words as masculine or feminine. In addition, the third person singular pronoun in Turkish refers to both women and men. However, no matter how much Turkish gives us the opportunity to communicate equally, it doesn't mean that it is entirely free from gender discrimination. Stereotypes held by Turkish society are reflected in the language through countless idioms and proverbs, not to mention slang.

#### Examples of discriminatory proverbs:

- x "Her başarılı erkeğin arkasında bir kadın vardır"  
(lit. Behind every successful man is a woman),
- x "Kızını dövmeyen dizini döver"  
(lit. He who doesn't beat his daughter beats his knee instead)
- x "Elinin hamuruyla erkek işine karışma"  
(Don't meddle in a man's business)

Another element in Turkish that reinforces gender stereotypes is the use of the word "adam" (lit. man) to refer to people. This word is problematic because it ignores women's experiences and behaviour, effectively rendering them invisible. Adam is deeply-rooted in Turkish and in Turkish culture, and it is widely used despite its discriminatory meaning.

#### Examples (and suggested replacements):

x Like a man	✓ Properly
x Man of his words	✓ Trustworthy
x Man of science	✓ Scientist
x Businessman	✓ Businessperson
x Mankind	✓ Humankind
x The man for the job	✓ Have your name all over it

#### The Impact of Sexist Stereotypes on Children

Sexist stereotypes also affect children as they try to make sense of the world around them. Children who grow up hearing all sorts of biased judgments can connect their potential with stereotypical gender roles which can affect how they behave. Therefore, we should prevent children from being exposed to practices and visual media that impose sexist roles on them. In communication materials, it is imperative that children be represented as themselves, not according to the gender roles society imposes on them. For example, depicting boys as soldiers, police officers, or fighters, and girls "playing house" and caring for their families goes against gender equality and prevents us from achieving equal opportunity.

# Chapter 4

## ESTABLISHING SOCIAL OPPORTUNITY IN BUSINESS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

To create work environments that are inclusive of both women and men, all communication must keep equality of opportunity in mind. Stereotypes can manifest themselves in business communication as much as they do in any other sphere. Thus, when writing corporate correspondence, e-mails, and other documents, internal and external alike, a conscious effort needs to be made to use language that avoids stereotypes at all costs – especially those that hinder equal opportunity.

### 1. Things to consider for external communication:

- Keep equality in mind for every type of media, including corporate websites, when marketing products and services to target audiences. Use language and choose visual items that promote gender equality.
- Those tasked with communicating with the media should be trained on how to avoid discrimination and understand that communication can serve as the breeding ground for gender discrimination.
- Speakers and participants at public/private events should reflect equality of opportunity and represent women and men equally. Avoid gender discrimination when assigning tasks during events.

### 2. Things to consider for internal communication:

- Be sensitive to social equality in all Holding and company internal communication material, when making decorative posters, and when coming up with slogans.
- Avoid stereotypical sexist words, proverbs, and idioms at work.
- While the words man and women refer to sex, the words mister-missis or sir-madame are used in addressing. In this sense, courtesy titles should be used to promote gender equality. When referring to sex, the word woman should be used instead of missis, and women's room instead of ladies' room.
- Avoid expressions of familiarity (e.g. in Turkish, tatlım (lit. "sweetie") or canım (lit. "my dear")) if you are not already acquainted with the person, so that you don't cross any personal boundaries.
- Avoid discriminatory language that alludes to people's biological or physical traits.
- Don't engage in behaviour that reinforces gender stereotypes. For example, appointing only women to be presenters or moderators at events, or assigning only men to serve as company spokespeople. Favouring women or men to do a job where an equal distribution of roles is required fosters discrimination.
- Enforce dress codes at work that avoid stigmatizing or limiting people based on their gender – but that fill the requirements of the job. Also, avoid commenting on how employees look or how they are dressed.

# Appendix

## APPENDIX: EVALUATION FORM ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY THROUGH COMMUNICATION

To detect and change gender stereotypes can be extremely difficult given how ingrained they are in most written and visual media. The best way to counter this is to ask questions that reveal stereotypes, and then take action to eliminate them:



Discourse & Behaviour	
	Are we making an effort to establish equal opportunity through our behaviour and discourse?
	Are we avoiding using sexist idioms and proverbs?
	Are we making statements that express one gender as being superior to the other?
	Are we unnecessarily indicating gender when talking about professions?
	Are we avoiding sexism when writing social media posts, press releases, or employee messages?
	Are we referring to women and men separately, instead of using the Turkish <i>adam</i> (lit. "man") in the general sense of the word?
	Does senior management promote equal opportunity in the language of their statements?
	Are spokespeople careful to avoid including gender stereotypes when writing speeches, press releases, and social media posts?
	Can both women and men become official spokespeople of the workplace?
	Does the workplace encourage women to take part in decision-making?



# Appendix

Communication & Visual Media	
	Are we avoiding stereotyping women and men?
	Are women and men represented equally in spheres such as home, school, and work?
	Are we avoiding adjectives like hanım/hanımcık/şirin/tatlı (lit. Lady-like, adorable, sweet) when referring to girls and aslan oğlum/koçum (lit. my lion son, my ram) when referring to boys?
	Are we avoiding imposing sexual identity on certain fictional characters (e.g. illustrating women as sexual objects)?
	Do the décor and the fictional characters' appearances and behaviour in the scene reflect gender equality?
	Are women and men given balanced air-time in advertising? If not, is there a specific reason why?
	Is the female voice also used as voiceover in advertising movies?
	Do visual materials represent women and men in a balanced and socially equal manner?
	Does visual media avoid portraying women and men in traditional roles?
	Does visual media reflect the diversity of the target audience?
	Does visual media avoid portraying men as bossy, indestructible, and robust, while women are naive and fragile?



Events & Meetings	
	Is female/male representation balanced equally?
	Are women employees encouraged to participate as speakers in events such as conferences and seminars?
	Are event tasks distributed equally between both genders?
	Are women relegated only to roles such as presenters, moderators, or facilitators at events?
	Is there an equal distribution of men and women among panellists and speakers?
	Are women and men granted equal airtime at meetings and events?

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