

# One Small Act at a Time: Ideas for More Inclusive Institutional Communities in Greece

Damianos Dumi-Sigalas  
University of Patras  
Rio, Greece  
nsigalas@ceid.upatras.gr

Τμήμα Υποστήριξης Φοιτητών, Απασχόλησης, Σταδιοδρομίας και Διασύνδεσης

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Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα  
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,  
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση  
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης

ΕΣΠΑ  
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Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση  
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης

ΕΣΠΑ  
2021-2027  
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο

Πρόγραμμα  
Ανθρώπινο Δυναμικό και  
Κοινωνική Συνοχή

**ΒΟΗΘΟΣ ΛΟΓΙΣΤΗ**

ΖΗΤΕΙΤΑΙ ΔΕΣΠΟΙΝΙΣ ΠΤΥΧΙΟΥΧΟΣ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΚΟΥ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟΥ

ΗΛΙΚΙΑΣ ΕΩΣ 30 ΕΤΩΝ ΓΙΑ ΒΟΗΘΟΣ ΛΟΓΙΣΤΗ

ΛΟΓΙΣΤΙΚΑ ΓΡΑΦΕΙΑ

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ΒΙΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΟ ΣΕ E-MAIL:

ΓΙΑ ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ & ΠΑΝΤΕΟΥ ΩΡΕΣ 08:30-11:00

**Figure 1: A redacted screenshot of a discriminatory job advertisement posted on a Greek university’s official career services website, requesting an unmarried young woman under 30 for an accounting assistant role. The screenshot is redacted and partially edited to remove all identifying information about all parties mentioned in it.**

## Abstract

Gender bias in higher education often manifest through subtle institutional practices: from a discriminatory job posting on university platform and day-to-day discussions to data collection and reporting conventions that have gone unquestioned for years. Prompted by a real incident at a Greek university’s student support services website and grounded in discussions within Human-Computer Interaction and Computing Education research, this poster argues that recognizing and articulating these small acts of exclusion is a necessary first step toward creating longer-term awareness. As a provocation, it offers three actionable entry points for discussion: (1) designing course materials and environments that foster ambient belonging for all, (2) adopting gender-inclusive data collection practices, and (3) embracing gender-neutral language by design.

## 1 Introduction

In 2023, the career services website of a Greek university published a job advertisement for an accounting assistant position at a local private firm. The ad explicitly requested a “young unmarried woman, university graduate, up to 30 years of age.” A single job posting discriminated on three axes: gender, age, and marital status. Greek anti-discrimination law (Law 4443/2016), which applies to the

workplace and transposes EU directives, explicitly prohibits such hiring criteria unless the characteristic is a genuine occupational requirement, which, for an assistant accounting role, it is not.

When this was brought to the university’s attention, the ad was removed, but no response was ever received. Yet before that point, it had passed through every stage of the process, from the employer who submitted it, to the staff who reviewed, approved, and published it online without being flagged as problematic. This raises a broader question: *how many similar, often seemingly minor, acts of exclusion are embedded in institutional practices and go unnoticed or unchallenged, quietly shaping the culture of our local (academic) communities?* The motivation in opening this discussion is not to search for responsibility, assign blame, or focus on one incident. Instead, such incidents once recognized and articulated, can become starting points for dialogue that leads to increased awareness.

It is easy to dismiss a single decision or incident as inconsequential, but research shows that these small moments do not stay small. Martell et al. [3] simulated a company that started with equal representation at every level; the only difference was that men were rated on a scale of 1–100 while women were rated on a scale of 0–99. Over repeated cycles of attrition and promotion, this one-point rating scale difference was enough to produce significant underrepresentation of women at senior levels. As Lewis et al. [2] point in discussing these findings, if small amounts of bias can

lead to such aggregate effects, then deliberate efforts to counteract bias can also accumulate toward meaningful change. At the same time, while small individual acts matter, meaningful inclusion also requires institutions to embed these principles into formal policies, review procedures, and clear accountability.

## 2 Discussion

Inspired by the theme of GEC 2026, this section outlines examples from Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Computing Education Research (CER) communities that point to practices which could be adopted or adapted in local contexts. These are not direct recommendations; much of the existing research originates in North American settings, and findings do not transfer wholesale to other regions with different cultural, linguistic, and institutional realities. Rather, they are presented as entry points for discussion.

### 2.1 Ambient Belonging

Ambient belonging refers to the feeling of fitting in and is passively shaped by cues in one's environment [2, 4]. These cues are picked up quickly and often unconsciously: the imagery on a wall or the aesthetic of a webpage can signal who is expected to be there and who is not. Metaxa et al. [4] explored this experimentally with two identical in content web pages for an introductory CS course that differed only in aesthetics: clean design with nature imagery vs. Star Trek imagery and terminal-style fonts produced significantly different responses. Women who viewed the stereotypically masculine page reported lower sense of belonging, enrollment interest, and self-confidence, while men were not negatively affected by either designs. More broadly, Lewis et al. [2] discuss how environmental cues, stereotype threat, and unconscious bias interact to shape participation, noting that even physical artifacts in a classroom can shape belonging. What makes ambient belonging relevant here is that acting on it does not require large-scale interventions. Reviewing a department's website, choosing examples in lecture slides that do not default to stereotypes, or simply being aware that these signals exist and matter, are actions that individuals and departments can take with minimal effort.

### 2.2 Data Collection

Data collection that includes gender comes up frequently in institutions, from student enrollment forms to administrative procedures and research activities, such as in questionnaires and surveys. In most of these cases, the available options default to a binary choice between male and female, and sometimes also mechanically include "other" as the only alternative. Spiel et al. [5] offer a practical guide for asking about gender in surveys. Their recommendations include making gender questions optional, using checkboxes rather than radio buttons to allow multiple selections, and offering five options: *woman*, *man*, *nonbinary*, *prefer not to disclose*, and *prefer to self-describe*, with the last one opening a free-text field. Before collecting gender data at all, those designing such forms, should ask whether they truly need it, and if so, whether they need biological sex, which is relevant mostly in medical contexts, or social gender identity. In settings where students create surveys for their projects or theses, supervisors can also help in guiding inclusive design.

### 2.3 Gender-Neutral Language

In English, the use of singular *they* offers a way to refer to any individual without carrying grammatical gender. Its use dates back to the 14th century, and although it has faced resistance, it is now accepted as standard by most major style guides, including APA, AP, and the Chicago Manual of Style [1]. English, in this regard, offers a relatively straightforward way to be used when someone wants or prefers to adopt gender-neutral expression.

In Greek, the situation is considerably harder, as nouns, adjectives, articles, and participles all carry grammatical gender. Attempting to make both men and women visible in-text, a common approach is to use dual-form suffixes (e.g., 'ο/η χειριστής/τρια' [the (m./f.) operator(m./f.)]). While well-intentioned, repeated use throughout a document results in dense, hard-to-read text that undermines the clarity of official documents such as institutional regulations and policy guidelines. Moreover, it remains strictly binary, offering no linguistic space for non-binary identities. These difficulties can be faced by exploring more creative writing strategies, such as the use of collective or role-based nouns (e.g., "the operating personnel" instead of "the male/female operator"), restructuring sentences to avoid gendered references, or adopting proactive inclusivity statements.

## 3 Conclusion

The primary goal of this work is to prompt an internal question for every reader, whether student, researcher, faculty member, or administrator: *Within my role in a community, what small act can I take that costs me little in effort, time, or resources, but may have a meaningful positive impact on those around me?* This might prove effective not only because it creates the possibility for something actionable, but also because it gives us an opportunity to practice empathy and consider the perspectives of others who may have different experiences, identities, or needs than our own.

To this extent, a discriminatory job posting on a university website can be viewed as just an incidental oversight; and was only used as an example that demonstrates that if something like that is left undiscussed, it can quietly contribute to patterns of normalized exclusion and discrimination. By recognizing such incidents and foregrounding them into dialogue, we create opportunities for change. This poster discusses three ideas in this direction: designing inclusive course environments [4], adopting gender-inclusive data collection [5], and embracing gender-neutral language. All three draw on research from Human-Computer Interaction and Computing Education Research, disciplines best positioned to inform computing education environments. Although none alone will resolve gender inequality in these environments, keeping them in mind and putting them into practice when opportunities arise can contribute to a cumulative effort that shifts institutional culture, one small act at a time.

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## References

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