

Catalogue

MICRO-AGGRESSIONS



**HOW MICRO CAN
AGGRESSION BE?**





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PREFACE

This collection brings together some 50 examples of micro-aggression that are most prevalent in six European countries (the Netherlands, Germany, Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy and Cyprus). They cover the different types of micro-aggression (micro-assaults, -insults and -invalidations) as well as the different sorts of micro-aggression (communicational, behavioral and environmental). For every example, the catalogue also identifies the underlying prejudice or bias that makes that verbal or non-verbal statement, act or environment micro-aggressive and harmful.



**HOW MICRO CAN
AGGRESSION BE?**

DEFINITIONS

SORTS OF MICRO-AGGRESSION

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Communicational micro-aggression | Everyday, casual and/or subtle types of communication (<i>both verbal and non-verbal</i>) that are painful because they have to do with a person's membership of a group that's discriminated against or subject to stereotypes |
| Behavioral micro-aggression | Everyday, casual and/or subtle types of (<i>non-communicational</i>) action that are painful because they have to do with a person's membership of a group that's discriminated against or subject to stereotypes |
| Environmental micro-aggression | Everyday, casual and/or subtle things in our daily environment that are painful because they have to do with a person's membership of a group that's discriminated against or subject to stereotypes |



HOW MICRO CAN
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DEFINITIONS

TYPES OF MICRO-AGGRESSION

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Micro-assaults | When a person intentionally behaves in a discriminatory way while not intending to be offensive |
| Micro-insults | When a person unintentionally behaves discriminatory |
| Micro-invalidations | When a person invalidates or undermines the experiences of a marginalized group |



HOW MICRO CAN
AGGRESSION BE?

COMMUNICATIONAL



**HOW MICRO CAN
AGGRESSION BE?**

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|---|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Using another than the preferred pronoun to address a person | verbal | micro-assault | anyone | choice of words cannot be hurtful | I stick to my preferred vocabulary, regardless of your preferences or feelings |
| Using the term 'old' in stead of 'older' or 'elderly' | verbal | micro-insult | elderly people | choice of words cannot be hurtful | I stick to my preferred vocabulary, regardless of your preferences or feelings or general guidelines |
| Asking about heteronormative relationships in stead of neutral questions such as 'do you have a partner/partner's?' | verbal | micro-insult | LGBTQIA+ people | assumption of heteronormative relationship | I don't consider other options than the norm, regardless of your preferences or feelings or general guidelines |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Emphasizing how 'normal' a disabled person with an outwardly visible disability looks | verbal & non-verbal | micro-insult | disabled people | denial of personal identity | I can decide for others how 'bad' or 'not bad' their diasability is |
| To say to a disabled person: "I can't believe you are married." | verbal | micro-assault | disabled people | denial of personal identity | the only thing when I see you is your disability |
| Disability related experiences are minimized or denied, e.g.: "Come on! We all have some disability." | verbal | micro-invalidation | disabled people | denial of disability experience | what you think or feel is not really or important to me |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|--|--|
| 'Comments like 'Where are you from?' or 'Where were you born?' said to someone with a different ethnic appearance than the norm | verbal | micro-insult | ethnic minorities | (not) belonging to a group of citizens is based on appearances | you are less/not in the same way part of our group because of your ethnic background |
| Comments like 'How did you get into that school?' or 'You speak the language so well' said to someone with a different ethnic appearance than the norm | verbal | micro-insult | ethnic minorities | assumption of inferiority | you are less competent/smart/intelligent/etc. because of your ethnic background |
| Making fun of names that are unfamiliar to you | verbal & non-verbal | micro-assault | anyone | denial of personal identity | your name is not normal/too difficult/weird |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Claiming you are not prejudiced against a certain group because you have friends/acquaintances from that group | verbal | micro-invalidatation | anyone | denial of racism/bias | I am immune to racism/biases because I socialise with people from different population groups |
| Stating it should be 'All lives matter' instead of 'Black lives matter' | verbal | micro-invalidatation | people of color | denial of racism | claiming you are experiencing the same kind of racism or no one is experiencing racism |
| Job advertisements that call for recent college graduate' or 'young energy' | verbal | micro-insult | elderly people | assumption of incompetence | older people are not capable or can't fit in with the team |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Asking a woman how she handles combining her job with having children, while not asking the same question to a man | verbal | micro-insult | women | gender roles are restrictive | women should be the main caregivers of children or women are not capable of combining a job with raising children while men are |
| Saying pregnant people can't do something work-related because of them being pregnant ('preggy brain') | verbal | micro-assault | pregnant people | assumption of incompetence | being pregnant is an obstacle to career development/your competence at work |
| Not paying attention (e.g. looking at your phone) when a young teammember is talking or presenting | non-verbal | micro-insult | young people | assumption of incompetence | the contribution of young people is less/not important |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Joking about women belonging in the kitchen | verbal | micro-assault | women | gender roles are restrictive | women are or should be housewives/stay-at-home-moms, instead of earning money and having a career |
| Stating that or acting like it is weird to see a male nurse at the hospital | verbal & non-verbal | micro-assault | women/men | gender roles are restrictive | men are not able to be a nurse or women should be doing this kind of job |
| Stating that or acting like it is weird to get treated by a relatively young doctor or therapist | verbal & non-verbal | micro-insult | young people | assumption of incompetence | young people are not as competent in their work as older people |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|--------------------|---------------|----------------|--|---|
| Call elderly people who dance and have fun as adorable | verbal | micro-insult | elderly people | infantilization | You are not on the same level of competence/capabilities as me |
| Joking about elderly people's clumsiness with technology | verbal | micro-assault | elderly people | assumption of incompetence | the elderly are unable to keep up with technology or digital progress |
| Joking about elderly people about having or not having sex | verbal | micro-assault | elderly people | denial of sensuality and sexuality for the certain age group | it is inappropriate/weird/ridiculous to have sex at an older age |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Asking someone 'If you are a vegetarian/vegan, how can you be that size?' | verbal | micro-insult | fat people | assumption of appearance | I do not believe what you are saying and I have the right to do so because of your appearance |
| Comments like 'boy or girl?' or 'when is your due date?' said to someone who is not pregnant | verbal | micro-insult | women | assumption of appearance | I can make assumptions about you and your body when I think you are pregnant, regardless of your preferences or feelings |
| The approach of journalists when reporting about the Roma minority, where they refer to the respondent as a local Roma settler and not by name | verbal | micro-insult | ethnic minorities | second-class citizens | Assuming it is enough of referring to a person or group from minority as "them" |

COMMUNICATIONAL

| Micro-aggression example | Verbal/ non-verbal | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|---|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Roma girl wins run. When giving her prize, the presenter of the award wished her to do that well in school also | verbal | micro-insult | ethnic minorities | assumption of inferiority | He says that she is from the group which is expected to likely fail in school |

BEHAVIORAL



**HOW MICRO CAN
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BEHAVIORAL

| Micro-aggression example | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| A faculty member at university gets mistaken for a service worker because of their clothes | micro-insult | anyone | assumption of appearance and inferiority | The way you dress matters for how I treat you and/or your job matters for how I treat you |
| Mistaking a person of color at work for a cleaning staff member | micro-invalidation | people of color | assumption of inferiority | You are not able to be on the same level as me |
| Repeatedly interrupting a female colleague during a meeting | micro-insult | women | assumption of inferiority | the contribution of female colleagues is less/not important |

BEHAVIORAL

| Micro-aggression example | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|---|----------------------|----------------|---|---|
| Refusing to believe that a female colleague has been offended by another male colleague | micro-invalidatation | women | questioning of judgement | you personal experience is untrue or unimportant |
| Mistaking a female doctor for a nurse | micro-insult | women | gender roles are restrictive | Women are not as likely to be doctors as men are |
| When a doctor talks to the (adult) child in stead of the elderly patient | micro-insult | elderly people | infantilization/ assumption of helplessness | You will not understand me or you are invisible to me |

BEHAVIORAL

| Micro-aggression example | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|---|---------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Automatically speaking very loudly or using a child-like voice when talking to elderly people | micro-insult | elderly people | assumption of capabilities | older people are not fully competent |
| Helping a person with a disability on to a bus or train while the person did not ask for help | micro-insult | disabled people | infantilization/ assumption of helplessness | you are not capable to take care of yourself and/or I know better than you |
| Touching a pregnant person's belly without permission | micro-assault | pregnant people | assumption of consent | I have the right to touch another person's body parts without their permission. |

BEHAVIORAL

| Micro-aggression example | Type | Group affected | Underlying prejudice/bias | Message |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|---|--|
| Assuming there are no LGBTQI+ people in the room | micro-invalidatation | LGBTQIA+ people | identifying as LGBTQIA+ is visible / LGBTQIA+ people are rare / | LGBTQIA+ people are instantly identifiable |
| A white person clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a person of color approaches or passess | micro-insult | people of color | assumption of criminal status | You are going to steal/you are not to be trusted |
| A person of color being followed around in a store by an employee | micro-insult | people of color | assumption of criminality | You are going to steal/you are not to be trusted |

ENVIRONMENTAL



**HOW MICRO CAN
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ENVIRONMENTAL

Micro-aggression example

Group affected

Underlying prejudice/bias

Message

Having to fill-in a form which only has two options, e.g. married/single or male/female

anyone

social/gender roles are restrictive and limited

other options than the norm provided for by the form are not accepted/possible

All toilets in a building are labeled as being meant for either men or women

LGBTQIA+ people

gender is limited to two options

people who don't identify as either male or female don't exist or are not important enough to have their own place

A person in a wheelchair is able to enter the office, but not able to go to the toilet because it is only accessible via stairs

disabled people

second-class citizenship

you are not as important to us as our able-bodied customers are

ENVIRONMENTAL

Micro-aggression example

Group affected

Underlying prejudice/bias

Message

Institutional scarcity of university professors of color

people of color

assumption of inferiority

people of color are less able to be a good university professor than white people are

A graduation hall at the University with the portraits of only white professors hanging on the walls

people of color

assumption of inferiority

under-representing people of color in academia is not a problem

Lack of female and non-binary authors in scientific curriculae

women and non-binary people

assumption of inferiority

the contribution of female scientists is not as good/important as that of male scientists

ENVIRONMENTAL

Micro-aggression example

Group affected

Underlying prejudice/bias

Message

Providing no sign language interpreter or subtitles during emergency situations and press conferences

deaf or hard-of-hearing people

second-class citizenship

you are not as important to us as hearing people are

Road signs only provided in the national language, not in the indigenous language

indigenous people

second-class citizenship

Your language is less/not important or relevant

A hospital with patients from different religions, in which a chapel is the only option for praying

religious minorities

Christianity is the most important religion

religions other than Christianity are less important/people of other religions do not have the right to pray everywhere they wish

ENVIRONMENTAL

Micro-aggression example

Group affected

Underlying prejudice/bias

Message

School holidays based on Christian traditions that don't take other religious holidays into consideration

religious minorities

second-class citizens

your religious celebrations are less important

Commercials that suggest that older people are out-of-touch with technology

elderly people

assumption of incompetence

The elderly are unable to keep up with technology or digital progress