



GIZ'S VISUAL LANGUAGE

- Introduction: Why we speak a common visual language
- GIZ's identity
- Image content
- Image composition – look and feel
- Promotional, decorative and project photos
- Use of AI
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INTRODUCTION | WHY WE SPEAK A COMMON VISUAL LANGUAGE



A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS.

The first visual impression often determines whether or not viewers engage more intensively with GIZ's range of services and the company itself.

Once we have their attention, images serve not only to illustrate GIZ projects, they also communicate the company's Corporate Principles and values. They are the **visual key** that conveys the corporate messages and contributes to the company's public image.

By constantly strengthening visual communication in particular, we simultaneously underpin GIZ's rational benefits: the aim is therefore to maintain and enhance the company's credibility, while modernising and adding emotional appeal to our public image. Having a clear and consistent understanding of the visual language and its implementation can help us to achieve this.

GIZ has a standardised photographic concept. All GIZ communication media should speak the same visual language across all channels, with a recognisable and homogeneous look: **unusual angles and naturalness of subjects**, as opposed to photo series that often seem too generic; **authentic snapshots; observation and documentation at eye level** rather than staged poses. In addition to observing the image style, it is important to ensure that photo content contributes to a culturally sensitive, non-discriminatory and respectful visual world.

GIZ's visual language plays a key role in ensuring that GIZ is perceived as a global service provider in international cooperation and a trailblazer for holistic change in sustainable development.

It is therefore essential that all images which appear in GIZ's communication and public relations work are consistent both in terms of their visual tonality and the way they convey our corporate messages. Only in this way can photographic images convey and further strengthen GIZ's corporate image.

The following pages contain both the guidelines and valuable and important information on creating photographic images for GIZ. We have also included new information on artificial intelligence (AI).

GIZ'S IDENTITY



VISION

WE WORK TO SHAPE A FUTURE WORTH LIVING AROUND THE WORLD.

Images in GIZ's visual world convey GIZ's mission statement and corporate values.

Mission Statement

- We manage change.
- We provide know-how.
- We develop solutions.
- We act as an intermediary.
- We are value-driven.
- We advise policymakers.
- We secure results.
- We are a global player.

Corporate values

Our actions are guided by the principles of sustainability.

We believe that only by combining social responsibility, ecological balance and economic capability will current and future generations be able to lead secure and dignified lives.

We advocate respect for human rights, equal opportunities and integrity.

WHAT IS GIZ?

We are a service provider in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development and international education work.

WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT GIZ AND THE WAY IT WORKS?

GIZ works in partnership, it is modern, innovative, efficient and effective.

Its approach is values-driven, networked, market- and service-orientated, with a commitment to quality.

WHAT DOES GIZ OFFER?

- Established client relations based on trust.
- Expertise developed over decades.
- Global networks.
- Integrated customised solutions.
- Support with transformations.

IMAGE CONTENT

IMAGE CONTENT DETERMINES WHICH PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES ARE SUITABLE FOR USE AT GIZ.



People being active rather than receptive



Competent, active people in real situations



GIZ staff being condescending (content-related)

DO'S | WHAT DO OUR IMAGES SHOW?

Images should focus on the essentials and on conveying a clear visual statement with comprehensible factual information.

Focus

- Impacts, objectives achieved, contented people, the results of the cooperation and positive developments (advisory services, education, policy dialogue, infrastructure)
- Snapshots of real life
- People being active rather than receptive

Situations

- Positive and optimistic impressions
- Real-life, future-oriented perspectives
- Sustainable solutions and high-quality products
- Innovative technologies and efficient strategies

DO'S | WHAT DO OUR IMAGES SHOW?

People

- Competent, active people in real situations, interacting
- Diversity
(seven dimensions of diversity, see the [Diversity Charter](#))

Attitude

- Respectful, dealings between equals in partnership
- Gender equality, gender balance
- Appreciative and non-discriminatory portrayal of people and situations

In a nutshell:

Images that show GIZ as a modern and innovative company that works in partnership.

DON'TS | WHAT DON'T OUR IMAGES SHOW?

Clichés and insensitive images

- Clichés, e.g.: problems, poverty, hunger, misery, naked children, despair, gratitude, charity
- GIZ staff prominent (foreground), larger (image composition) or intimidating towards other people
- Hierarchies between GIZ staff and our partners
- Culturally insensitive images (e.g. GIZ staff in national costume)
- Images that are detrimental to the dignity of the people depicted

Discriminatory images

- Racism, sexism or any other form of discrimination
- Portraits of people who on account of being clearly recognisable or because of the context/publication of the image may find their safety compromised (e.g. LGBTQIA+ individuals, women from a totalitarian regime pictured without a head covering, etc.)
- Reproduction of stereotypes, including:
 - a person working on the land rather than at a computer doing accountancy work
 - a woman preparing food in the kitchen as opposed to driving a state-of-the-art tractor

IMAGE COMPOSITION | LOOK & FEEL

PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES CONVEY THE CORPORATE VALUES OF GIZ IN AN EMOTIONAL WAY.

The compositional style defines the look and feel of the visual world and awakens an emotional readiness to absorb information.



Focus on interaction, realistic and vivid colours



The camera should not 'play a role', it focuses on the essentials



Crowded, image statement not clear, objects irrelevant to the image statement

DO'S | HOW DO WE DESIGN OUR IMAGES?

Look / image composition

- Modern, unusual compositions
- Clear shapes, use of neutral surfaces, uncluttered image content

Focus

- Focus on action, interaction
- Use of deliberately shallow depth of field

Perspective

- Eye-level shots

Lighting and colours

- Natural lighting (daylight where possible), avoid use of flash
- A photo series should use lighting that is similar throughout
- or appropriate to the image
- Realistic, vivid colours, bright and cheerful

Cropping

- Unusual, exciting, modern, reduced to the essentials

DO'S | HOW DO WE DESIGN OUR IMAGES?

People

- The camera should not 'play a role', it observes/participates
- Subjects wear the same recognisable clothes within a photo series

Situations

- Spontaneous
- Authentic
- Credible
- Exciting

DON'TS | HOW DO WE NOT DESIGN OUR IMAGES?

Artificial/contrived

- Posed, artificial, stereotypical
- Fake, like advertising material
- Monochrome, artificial colours
- Excessive use of flash, unnatural lighting

Poor photographic quality

- Dull, lacking colour and life, boring, dated
- Crowded, busy

Judgemental

- Condescending

Arbitrary

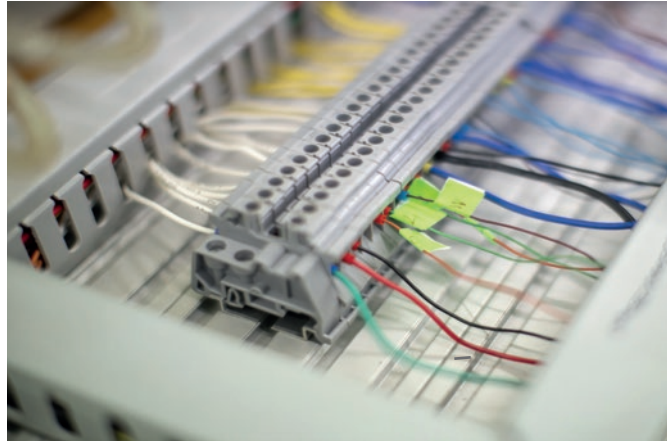
- Photos should not show any objects that do not contribute to the image statement
- (e.g. bottles, cups on tables, unused furniture in the background, etc.)
- Images must not display logos that are irrelevant in the context of GIZ activities

PROMOTIONAL, DECORATIVE AND PROJECT PHOTOS

IN ITS USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES, GIZ DIFFERENTIATES BETWEEN:



Modern, unusual compositions



Use of deliberately shallow depth of field



Authentic, clear visual message

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Promotional photos are an essential part of GIZ's visual language and thus its corporate design. They reflect our corporate values and present GIZ as a modern, highly competent, experienced company with worldwide operations.

DECORATIVE PHOTOS

Decorative photos include close-up images of objects relevant to specific areas of our work. Their use is always context-related and in combination with promotional photos and/or project photos.

PROJECT PHOTOS

Project photos have a reportage or documentary style. GIZ achieves results. Images depict projects, local people, GIZ experts working with partners.

→ Further details on these three categories and key aspects relating to the creation and use of photographic images can be found on subsequent pages

GIZ PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

GIZ IS A MODERN FEDERAL ENTERPRISE.



Bright, predominantly homogeneous and out-of-focus backgrounds allow the message or interaction to take centre stage

Promotional photos are an essential part of GIZ's visual language and thus its corporate design. They reflect our corporate values and present GIZ as a modern, highly competent, experienced company with worldwide operations.

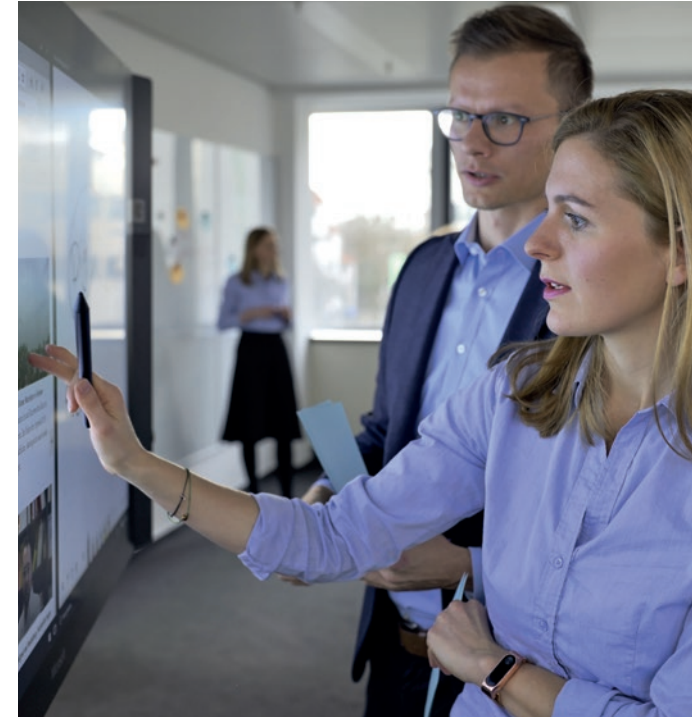
The images document GIZ's work and clearly convey its impact. Images are of very high photographic quality.



Positive snapshots of real life

Promotional photos are used primarily to showcase the company and for acquisition purposes in company-wide publications.

GIZ's visual language portrays people in real situations: **authentic, respectful, credible and as partners working together.** The photographic focus is on the essential content, the visual statement is unambiguous and clear. Spontaneous and situational photography, unusual perspectives, exciting image cropping – **content engages the viewer's curiosity, offers a range of opportunities for identification and appeal to the viewer's emotions.**



Innovative technologies and efficient strategies

GIZ's photographic images differ markedly from the aesthetics of the world of advertising and marketing. We do not use 'cosmetic' images with models 'styled' for promotional purposes in obviously staged situations.

GIZ'S DECORATIVE PHOTOS

MODERN AND UNUSUAL IMAGES, REDUCED TO THE ESSENTIALS.



Clear shapes, uncluttered images, natural lighting

Decorative photos include close-up images of objects relevant to specific areas of our work. Their use is always **context-related** and in combination with promotional photos and/or project photos.



Modern, unusual compositions

Landscapes, pictures of wind turbines, etc. can also be decorative photos, provided they relate to GIZ's work.



Focus on the essentials, clear image statement

In addition to accuracy of content, the photographic quality of decorative photos must also be a priority. Depth of field, colour brilliance, exciting image sections, interesting lighting, etc. are all key factors in creating an appealing impact with nature and macro photography.

GIZ PROJECT PHOTOS

GIZ ACHIEVES RESULTS.



Competent, active people in real situations

Project photos have a **reportage and documentary style or function**. They depict projects, people in the countries we work in, GIZ experts working with partners.



Exciting cropping and a focus on the essentials

Photographic images should not be staged, the camera should not 'play a role'.



Focus on action, interaction

Photos do not depict hunger, suffering or poverty by portraying victims. Photos should instead show the impact of GIZ projects.

NOTE ON BMZ BROCHURES



Important note on cropping:

For each series of shots taken, make sure to include photos that can be used as cover images for publications produced in the BMZ/ Federal Foreign Office layout.

These publications are designed in line with the German Government's corporate design guidelines, and for the brand zone (logo positioning and title) they feature a 'wave' element across the top of the title page (see examples above).

Accordingly, images should be selected and/or created in terms of their cropping.

Further important requirements beyond the scope of this handout can be found in the GIZ Corporate Design Center at: [BMZ in Germany](#)

For information on designs by other commissioning parties/ clients, see: [Corporate Design Center, commissioning parties guidelines](#)

POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF USING AI WITHIN GIZ IMAGERY

The topic of AI (artificial intelligence) is gaining momentum, and GIZ, too, sees opportunities in the use of AI. Since it is a field that is changing and evolving, this document does not seek to set out GIZ's current position on the subject. **When using artificial intelligence, we must therefore always be aware that AI-generated products come with benefits, challenges and responsibility.**

In development cooperation, GIZ works in fragile contexts, in different cultures and on an equal footing with partner countries. Our focus is on people and their life situation. In terms of visual communication, this comes with great responsibility – and particularly when AI is involved.

Our visual language conveys impacts, results and solutions. One of the key aspects of this content is credibility: this is the only way to ensure that GIZ is seen as a global service provider in development cooperation.

We strongly advise against the creation of photorealistic images using AI. Illustrations and abstract images may be used to a limited extent, since with illustrations it is possible to deduce that material is not documentary in nature.

Photographic images created by AI, including those without artificially generated people and life forms:

- do not meet the requirements of credibility, authenticity and almost all other requirements of GIZ's visual language;
- are difficult to check for coherence;
- have to be marked as such, since the legal situation differs from images created by humans;
- look like images for a marketing campaign instead of having the observational character of documentary photos;
- are too slick, too promotional.

AI-generated illustrations may be used to a limited extent and:

- use the ideal, highly consistent impact to reduce density of information;
- depict plans, ideas and things that lie in the future without giving the impression that they already exist;
- sum up concisely things that are difficult to depict;
- illustrate complex topics in an exciting way and also provide an opportunity to present several required illustrations in the same visual look.
- A successful example from 'akzente', GIZ's digital story portal:
[The high seas: heroes of the ocean](#)

In a nutshell:

Development cooperation takes place in different cultures and also represents this visually. Clothing created by AI (for example headscarves), the way they are worn, coloured or tied can send out different messages about religion, origin, political views and group affiliation; these subtle nuances may not be known to the person creating them (with the help of AI). However, they may show people in a context that could endanger them and assign misleading attributes. AI may also fill image backgrounds incorrectly without the AI user being aware: for example, AI might choose to depict in the image background a type of grain that cannot be grown in the area described. This gives rise to the kind of misinformation (cultural distortion) that leads to loss of credibility.

Of course, by investing a great deal of time and knowledge of cultural nuance it is possible to feed the AI in such a way that visual results are coherent and correct in the message they convey. **But photographic images can only have credibility if the subjects they depict are real:** this is the only way to guarantee that the very development cooperation for which GIZ works in 120 countries gives rise to authenticity, partnership and respect.

The following page shows a negative example illustrating why GIZ does not permit the creation of photorealistic scenes using AI.

USE OF AI

! NEGATIVE EXAMPLE SHOWING A PHOTOREALISTIC IMAGE OF A PERSON, WHICH IS NOT PERMITTED UNDER OUR GUIDELINES !



Photo credit: this image was generated with AI assistance.

Outline of the reasons why this is not permitted:

- 1 Protection of the individual**
Is this a girl (a minor) or a young woman?
 - 2 Credibility**
Do external attributes seem appropriate?
Is this the person's real life?
 - 3 Cultural distortion**
Is the clothing appropriate to the situation captured?
To the region? To the person photographed?
 - 4 Misrepresentation**
Are these crops actually grown in the region depicted?
- **Consequently:**
- Falsified reporting on results
 - Legitimate question as to why no real project photo is shown.
This highlights once again the importance of credibility for all our photographic images.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON IMPLEMENTATION



KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE CREATING AND SELECTING PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES:

- What story does the image tell and who does it depict?
- What are/would be the consequences of publishing the photos for the people depicted and their families?
- Does the image convey GIZ's corporate values?
- Are the situations credible, authentic, respectful and free from discrimination?
- Does the image avoid scenes that reproduce imbalances of power (skin colour, age, inclusion, gender)?

TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION

Photographic quality

- High image resolution
- Optimum image sharpness, contrast
- Image variants (greater flexibility in the design of cover pages for publications, for example...)

Possible uses

- Print, digital
- Landscape and portrait formats

CONTENT IMPLEMENTATION

Values-driven

- Respectful, partnership of equals
- Modest
- Sustainable

Economical

- Efficient
- Powerful communication and implementation

Committed to quality

- Integrated customised solutions
- High-quality products

Effective

- Results, solutions
- Contented people

As partners

- Established client relations based on trust
- People in dialogue and/or working together on something (e.g. producing)

High-performing

- Know-how developed over decades
- Showcasing expertise

Innovative

- Modern technologies
- Innovative strategies

USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

Legal matters

- Have the people photographed been informed about the intended use and storage of the photos?
- Has a written declaration of consent to use of the images been obtained from the subjects?
- Have the people photographed seen the images and been given the option to refuse their publication?
- Have local laws, German press law and the EU General Data Protection Regulation been observed?
- Children are sometimes photographed in the context of educational work, for example. A declaration of consent from the legal guardian is mandatory here.

Responsibility

When we create and publish photographic images, we bear responsibility for the content and people shown.

Photo credits

Copyright and rights of use respected? More information:

[Data protection, image rights and rights of use](#) (GIZ internal link)

Context

- Provide information on photo content (projects, conferences, people, etc.) so that images can be placed in context.
- Details of individual situations (e.g. date, location, building, participants, names, etc.) should also be documented (e.g. for picture captions) and ideally saved in the file information for each photo.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (GIZ INTERNAL LINKS)

- [Services, photos and image rights](#)
 - [GIZ photo database](#)
(Registration possible for externals)
- We welcome feedback on this handout at:
unternehmenskommunikation@giz.de