

COST Action CA21101 COSY Gender Equality Plan

Last update: May 2025

1 Introduction

This document has been created following the recommendations of the COST Association (<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2024/11/COST-Gender-Equality-Plan-07112024.pdf>), following their Gender Equality policy (<https://www.cost.eu/about/strategy/gender-equality/>). It is based on the templated provided by the COST Association (<https://www.cost.eu/gep-template>).

It describes the current state, plans and activities of the COST Action CA21101 - Confined Molecular Systems: From A New Generation Of Materials To The Stars (COSY) on the date indicated at the top of the document. It is structured as follows:

1 Introduction	1
2 Gender balance in the COSY COST Action.....	2
Measures for Gender Balance.....	2
3 Good practices and plans to incorporate a gender dimension	2
General Measures	3
Good Practices to Keep In Mind When Organising COSY-Related Events.....	3
Activities organised and planned by the COSY COST Action	3
Grant Period 1 (2023):	3
Grant Period 2 (2024):	4
Grant Period 3 (2025):	6
Grant Period 4 (2026)	9
Blank Activity Template	9
4 Challenges and difficulties in gender mainstreaming.....	10
5 Further Links and References	10

2 Gender balance in the COSY COST Action

The balance of the COSY Action at the start of the Action was: 34% of women, 27% of Inclusiveness Target Country (ITC) and 6% of Young Researcher and Innovator (YRI) participants.

The ITCs are defined at: <https://www.cost.eu/about/strategy/excellence-and-inclusiveness/>

The YRIs are defined at: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/10/Annex-II-level-A-Glossary-REVISION.pdf>

The current balance of the COSY Action participants with respect to their gender, age and country of residence is in Table 1.

Table 1: The gender and origin balance of the COSY participants (corresponding to May 2025)

Gender (self-described)	Participation	Leadership position	Young participants	ITC participants
Women	38%	52%	17% (45% YRI are women)	18% (46% are women)
Men	62%	48%	21% (55% YRI are men)	21% (54% are men)
Nonbinary	0%	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	0.5%	0%	0%	0%

Measures for Gender Balance

The participants of the COSY Action are encouraged to consider the gender and country of origin when inviting new members to the Action.

Scientists from underrepresented groups are encouraged to join COSY Action and participate in its activities.

The FemCOSY initiative was founded by the Chair, the TS Coordinator and the YR Coordinator in GP1. In GP2 other members joined on voluntary basis. In GP2, FemCOSY members decided that it would be useful to have a coordinator, so the application process was open, and the coordinator was selected by TS Coordinator and the YR Coordinator in GP2 and then confirmed by the MC members. Currently new potential members are subject to approval of the FemCOSY Board.

3 Good practices and plans to incorporate a gender dimension

The COSY action has set up the FemCOSY initiative, a group of highly motivated female members, which organise activities and suggest policies to raise awareness of gender related issues and combat the inequalities connected to them (see more details below).

Namely, the COSY participants involved in this are: the FemCOSY Board with the FemCOSY Coordinator, and the Inclusiveness Coordinator.

General Measures

Based on the recommendation of the COST association:

- To publish this GEP on the Action's website and ensure all network members are aware of it.
- To promote this GEP and our gender equality activities on social media.
- To plan a dedicated GEP slot in at least one MC meeting per year.
- To share your good practices with the COST Association
- To involve female and early-career female researchers in leadership positions
- To involve female and early-career female researchers organizing committees for COSY events, chairing sessions, and prioritizing them for invited lectures and conference presentations.

Good Practices to Keep In Mind When Organising COSY-Related Events

The COSY Action members are encouraged to follow the Best Practices Document assembled and maintained by the FemCOSY Board Members.

The Best Practices Document is currently in development.

Activities organised and planned by the COSY COST Action

Grant Period 1 (2023):

Activity name: FemCOSY Meeting

Objective(s)	To promote the achievements of female researchers and to start a roundtable discussion
Timeline (if applicable)	May 2, 2023; 10:00 – 12:00
Activities planned / carried out	A webinar with two sections. In the first, female speakers – Prof. María Pilar de Lara-Castells , IFF-CSIC (Spain); Prof. Leticia González , University of Vienna (Austria); Prof. Nadine

	Halberstadt, CNRS, LCAR-IRSAMC (France); Prof. Karina Morgenstern, Ruhr-University of Bochum (Germany) – were invited to speak about their experiences based on these questions: (a) Main obstacles you had to overcome: – Would it have been easier or harder if you were male? (b) Did you at any stage have to face prejudices? – If so, how was it possible to overcome them? (c) Why did you choose to become a scientist? – Did you have any role model, and if so, was it a male or a woman? (d) What do you consider your biggest achievements and biggest failures? – And why? Following the talks, a roundtable discussion was set up.
Webpage link (if applicable)	https://cost-cosy.eu/activity/femcosy/
Expected impact / Measure of success	Starting a discussion on the position of women in science and the obstacles they have to overcome
Lessons learnt	The topic of women in science has a significant geographical dimension, with women from different countries observing different obstacles. The format of a webinar with a roundtable discussion has been shown to be successful.

Grant Period 2 (2024):

Activity name: The 2nd FemCOSY Virtual Meeting

Objective(s)	To build on the success of the previous year and promote the achievements of female scientists and to start a roundtable discussion with the inclusion of men
Timeline (if applicable)	May 2, 2024; 9:00 – 13:00
Activities planned / carried out	A webinar with two sections. In the first section, three successful women (Prof. Berta Fernández Rodríguez, University of Santiago de Compostela; Prof. Maria J. López, University of Valladolid; Dr. Tatiana López, CEO Nanogap & Hysun) were invited to talk about their life experiences. In the second section, the speakers were joined by three male guests (Prof. Malcolm Levitt, University of Southampton, United Kingdom, Prof. Markus Meuwly, University of Basel, Prof. Paul Scheier, University of Innsbruck, Austria) and the roundtable was guided by these questions: (a) In your experience, what specific challenges have women faced in advancing to leadership roles within the scientific community? – What strategies have proven successful in overcoming these challenges? (b) Do you observe any differences in your collaborations with male and female colleagues?

	– For example: Do female/male colleagues help in keeping the research group united? – Are female/male colleagues more competitive? – Are female/male colleagues more helpful in the different stages of writing a manuscript? – Do female/male colleagues often present different perspectives on how to face a given problem? – Are female/male colleagues more helpful for tasks outside those explicitly valued, such as mentoring undergrads? (c) How can we encourage and support young girls and women to pursue and persist in scientific fields? – In your institute or/and in the group you lead, are there any initiatives in this direction? (d) How can we promote a more inclusive and equitable scientific culture? – How can we ensure this culture values diverse perspectives and talents? – How can it lead to greater representation of women in leadership positions?
Webpage link (if applicable)	https://cost-cosy.eu/activity/the-2nd-femcosy-meeting/
Expected impact / Measure of success	Continuing a discussion on the position of women in science and the obstacles they have to overcome, introducing the survey to be done later in the year.
Lessons learnt	The business world has norms/expectations that can be challenging to navigate (eg the tradition finalising a contract in a male-only environment) for all participants. The interplay of personal decisions, family support, institutional support, social support and biases; and societal obstacles is a complex problem to navigate – both for women in their career progression and for the women and men trying to address these issues from a position of leadership.

Activity name: FemCOSY Survey

Objective(s)	To query COSY Action participants on their experiences with gender related issues, with the aim to describe: Factors impacting the gender imbalance in the scientific fields covered by the COSY action. Aspects that have a major positive influence on choosing the scientific career (e.g., PhD advisors, peers, and family).
Timeline (if applicable)	Survey preparation: The entire grant period up to its release Survey data collection: 23 rd September - 7 th October 2024 Survey data analysis: the rest of Grant Period 2, Grant Period 3
Webpage link (if applicable)	--
Activities planned / carried out	Survey preparation and approval by the FemCOSY Board. Promotion of the upcoming survey among the COSY participants. Survey data collection. Preliminary survey data analysis.

Expected impact / Measure of success	A large number of COSY participants filling in the survey Survey data showing trends in what influences different people with respect to their gender (and possibly age)
Lessons learnt	It is hard to agree on whether or not are 90 participants (out of 400) a reasonable sample of COSY. Involvement of someone with experience in Humanities is necessary. The preliminary data show clear (but unsurprising) evidence of gender-related trends.

Grant Period 3 (2025):

Activity name: The FemCOSY Face-to-Face Board Meeting

Objective(s)	To meet as the whole FemCOSY Board in person and discuss plans for the next period
Timeline (if applicable)	January 24, 2025; 9:30 – 20:30
Webpage link (if applicable)	--
Activities planned / carried out	1. Welcome to participants, introduction and adoption of the agenda 2. Brief introduction of all participants at the table 3. Summary of FemCOSY events and activities from Grant Period 1 and Grant Period 2 4. Reporting on the FemCOSY Survey results 5. Planning for the next FemCOSY Meeting 6. Analysing the COST template and creating the Gender Equality Plan of the COSY Action 7. Presenting ideas for the Gender Equality Plan and FemCOSY initiatives 8. Round Table Discussion 9. Closing remarks
Expected impact / Measure of success	On site discussion on the topics set by the program. The creation and publication of this Gender Equality Plan Discussing and setting up the organisation team for the activities in the following period. Evaluation of the survey results and assigning role in their publication.
Lessons learnt	Some things are easier done in person than online.

Activity name: Promoting Women on the COSY Action Social Media

Objective(s)	To start and maintain a culture of noting and highlighting events connected to gender equality in the COSY Action and science in general
Timeline (if applicable)	The entire grant period, with interest to notable dates (International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 th February), International Women's Day (8 th March), the day of FemCOSY Webinar, release of the FemCOSY podcast, release of the FemCOSY survey results report, ...)
Webpage link (if applicable)	https://x.com/i/flow/login?redirect_after_login=%2FCOSY_Action https://bsky.app/profile/cosy-action.bsky.social https://www.youtube.com/@costcosy https://www.linkedin.com/company/cosy-cost-action-ca21101

Activities planned / carried out	Publishing social media posts on or around important dates and events connected to gender equality in COSY Action and related scientific fields.
Expected impact / Measure of success	Engagement on the social media Participants of the COSY action are aware of these dates, events and post on the COSY social media.
Lessons learnt	

Activity name: The 3rd FemCOSY Virtual Meeting

Objective(s)	To build on the success of the previous years – to promote the achievements of female scientists and further explore the interplay of their personal and professional lives
Timeline (if applicable)	April 29, May 15 2025
Webpage link (if applicable)	https://cost-cosy.eu/activity/the-3rd-femcosy-meeting/
Activities planned / carried out	As planned, we followed the previous format of a section with talks followed by a roundtable discussion. A married couple of scientists (Ana Belén Muñoz García & Michele Pavone) as well as two female researchers (Eva Klimešová, Marinella Striccoli) covered the section of talks about life experiences. They were joined by two male researchers (Marcel Mudrich, Alkwin Slenczka) for the Round Table section. The inclusion of a male member of the organising team of this meeting increased the interest and involvement of the male participants of the Action. To help foster a more supportive environment at the home institutions of COSY participants, the invitation email is set to contain an invitation to Gender Equality administrative personnel to be forwarded by the COSY participants to the respective employees at their institutions.
Expected impact / Measure of success	To continue the discussion on the interplay of family and institutional support required by and available to women in science. To involve more people in the discussion of gender in science both by the active inclusion of men and administrative staff.
Lessons learnt	Due to power outage in Southern Europe, the event was postponed to 15th May 2025. The inclusion of a married couple among the speakers led the discussion to focus heavily on family support and sharing the load within partnership. A role of financial or career stability when starting a family was also discussed. During the roundtable, various examples of how institutions are trying to support women and young parents (sometimes to the exclusion of parent that do not meet age criteria).

Activity name: Podcast

Objective(s)	To release a podcast highlighting the ways COSY Action supports women and young researchers
--------------	---

Timeline (if applicable)	Script preparation: November 2024 – January 2025 Podcast publication: Spring 2025
Webpage link (if applicable)	https://researchpod.org/informatics-technology/excellence-through-inclusiveness-cost-cosy
Activities planned / carried out	To prepare a script for a podcast summarizing the concept and importance behind the support of women and young scientists within the COSY Action, highlighting the achievements in this area in the previous years of the action. The podcast itself will be then recorded and published by a specialised company. Promotion of the podcast on social media and sharing the link to the podcast on social media and in email upon its release.
Expected impact / Measure of success	Number of views and impressions (expected about 4000 views and 65000 impressions based on the performance of podcasts on COSY Working Groups) Engagement on COSY social media In-person feedback from COSY participants
Lessons learnt	

Activity name: Best Practices Guidelines

Objective(s)	To assemble and maintain a document outlining the recommended best practices for event organised by COSY members
Timeline (if applicable)	Spring-Summer 2025
Webpage link (if applicable)	--
Activities planned / carried out	To prepare a document that describes the best practices for - Selection of participants of an event - Code of conduct for in person and online events - Moderation of a discussion that promotes the voices of underrepresented groups Discussion of the document within FemCOSY Board Dissemination of the document among COSY participants Bringing the practices to use during events (co-)organised by FemCOSY members
Expected impact / Measure of success	COSY participants will be aware of the existence of this document Organising committees of events within COSY will take the document into account when planning and leading their event In-person feedback from COSY participants
Lessons learnt	

Activity name: FemCOSY Survey Data Analysis and Release

Objective(s)	To analyse and publish the data collected in the survey conducted during the previous grant period
Timeline (if applicable)	In person discussion: 24 th January 2025 Data analysis: entire GP3 Report writing: starting at the end of January, with the first check-up meeting on 14 th February 2025

Webpage link (if applicable)	--
Activities planned / carried out	In person discussion of the preliminary survey findings at the Face-to-Face Board Meeting Assigning tasks related to the survey data analysis and report writing to FemCOSY Board members Communicating the survey results within the COSY Action (via email and as a talk during the General Meeting) Communicating the survey results on COSY social media Publishing the survey results in the Open Research Europe Platform
Expected impact / Measure of success	Getting feedback on the survey results from the COSY participants Starting a discussion on the trends captured in the survey – within the COSY Action and among its followers on social media Publishing the results as an open access source of scientific data.
Lessons learnt	

Grant Period 4 (2026)

Activity name: FemCOSY Science in 1 Minute

Objective(s)	To highlight the achievements of young women within COSY
Timeline (if applicable)	Preparation during GP3, release during GP4
Webpage link (if applicable)	https://cost-cosy.eu/activity/femcosy-science-in-1-minute/
Activities planned / carried out	Female PhD students within the COSY participants will be invited to register to be interviewed on these questions: (a) What is your COSY paper about? (b) Why do you think it is important? (c) How do you feel about your achievement? The interviews will be conducted via Zoom, recorded and distributed as short videos on the COSY website and social media platforms, making them accessible to a broad audience.
Expected impact / Measure of success	
Lessons learnt	

Further planned activities, without set timelines or dates:

- Workshop for gender equality leaders
- Interview with senior women in COSY/related fields
- The 4th FemCOSY Virtual Meeting

Blank Activity Template

Activity name:

Objective(s)	
Timeline (if applicable)	

Webpage link (if applicable)	
Activities planned / carried out	
Expected impact / Measure of success	
Lessons learnt	

4 Challenges and difficulties in gender mainstreaming

The idea of gender mainstreaming (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>) is not very widespread across the fields of Physics, Chemistry and Material Sciences.

The first step in this area will be to introduce the FemCOSY Board members to this topic at a meeting during GP3, and to incorporate it into the mental framework in which we approach the topic of gender.

5 Further Links and References

[Impact of gender equality plans across the European Research Area](#)