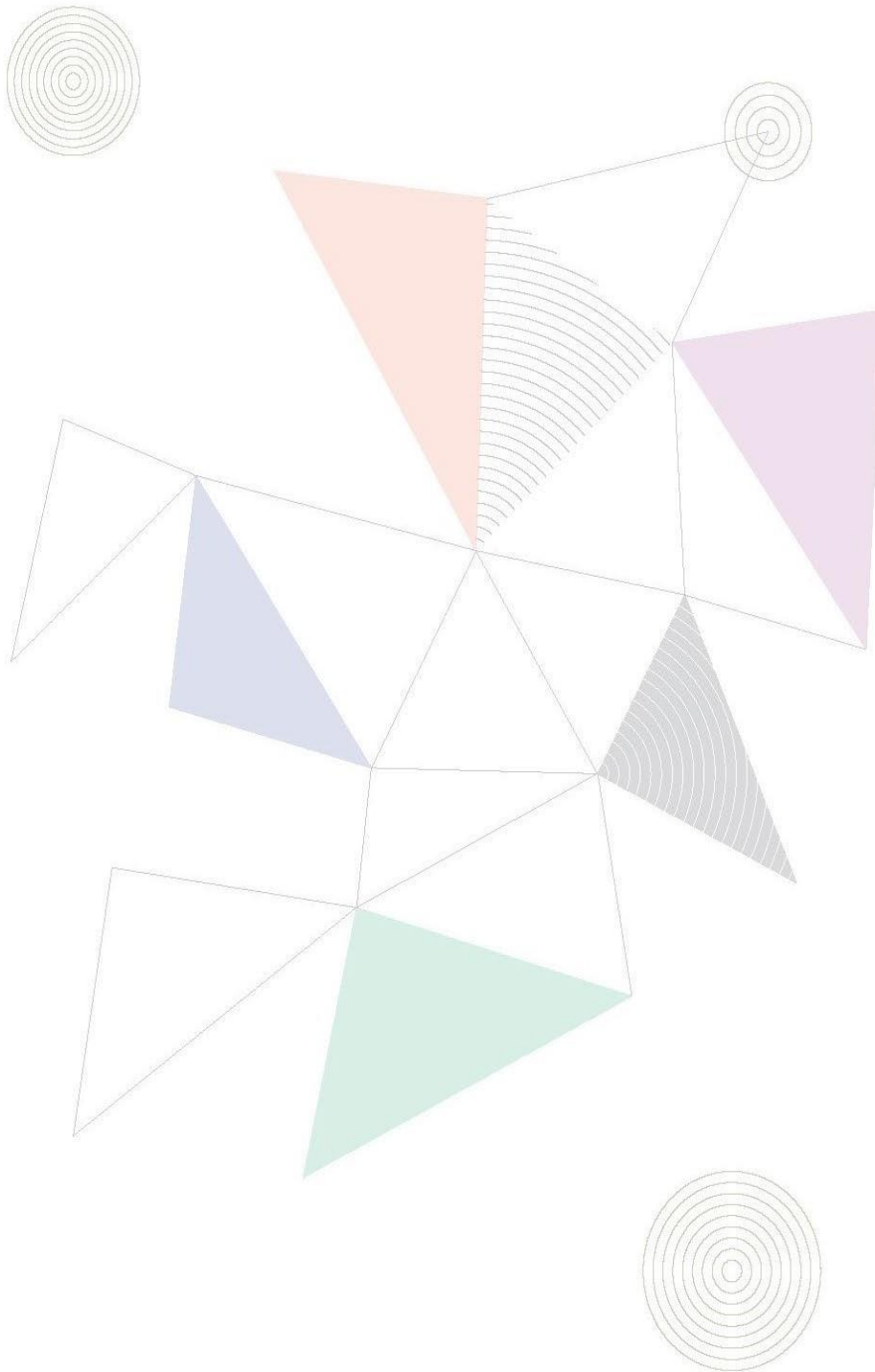


Gender Equality Plan for COST Profefeedback Action



1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

The European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) is fully committed to support the advancement of gender equality in all COST activities, with a specific focus on the COST Actions. The COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy strongly encourages gender balance in its research networks, as well as the take up of leadership positions by women COST Action participants. As such, COST aims to ensure equal opportunities and gender-friendly career advancement.

Regarding the contents of the research COST Actions carry out, COST embraces the view shared and advanced by the [European Commission](#) that truly excellent research will always explore potential gender dimensions.

Women's rights and gender equality are under increasing pressure in some societies, also in COST Member Countries and other countries participating in COST Actions. Those challenges are of course not limited to Europe. COST has a role to play in securing equal opportunities in all our activities, and to not accept any inequality of opportunity based on gender.

In order to formalise, structure, and advance gender equality initiatives and activities of the COST Programme, in November 2021 the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) decided to establish a Working Group on 'the development of a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for activities in the COST Programme'. This GEP is the result of the work of the CSO Working Group. The COST Administration shall be responsible for the promotion, implementation, and monitoring of the GEP for activities in the COST Programme.

1.2. Objective

The overall objective of this GEP is to promote an inclusive culture and a gender dimension in any research carried out in COST Actions, and, where possible, on the additional activities for COST Actions organised by the COST Association. The COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy already encourages gender balance of research networks, as well as the take up of leadership positions by (young) women COST Action participants. The GEP lists additional recommendations that the Action may consider implementing (though by no means obliged to do so). It is important to note that the COST Association has produced this GEP for guidance only, and Actions are invited to implement the GEP's recommendations on a voluntary basis.

In the context of the Profeedback project, the establishment of a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is deemed a matter of significance. This project acknowledges the vital role that gender equality holds in fostering innovation, enhancing the quality of research, and ensuring that diverse perspectives are adequately represented. By prioritizing the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive GEP, the Profeedback project seeks to exemplify best practices in inclusivity and equity within the policy evaluation community, thereby contributing to a more balanced and just research environment. Furthermore, incorporating a gender perspective into the analytical framework can significantly elevate the quality and depth of the analyses conducted, ensuring that all relevant dimensions are thoroughly examined.

As the gender dimension in research concerns the scientific contents of the research carried out, this is not per se covered by what COST funds. However, true to its commitment to excellence and inclusion, COST assumes all Actions to carry out excellent research paying attention to all relevant aspects. Thus COST recommends to all parties of a COST Action to apply sex and/or gender analysis to their projects, taking into consideration who is targeted by the research, who benefits from it, and whether and how an approach or outcome may have different implications for different groups (men, women, people with diverse genders, and intersectional categories such as age, social status etc.) and hence may require an update (extra provisions, such as changes in research design, interview partners, samples etc.) to be holistic and excellent.

Within the scope of Profeedback, it is also relevant to examine gender mainstreaming topics to ensure that gender equality perspectives are comprehensively integrated into the project's evaluation and feedback processes.

This GEP is prepared for the remaining period of the project, specifically the GP 4 phase, which is typically shorter than a full GEP planning cycle. The primary goal of this document is to introduce the concept of a GEP and to initiate the groundwork for implementing a GEP system that can serve as a foundation during the later stages of project execution.

Given the shorter timeframe, the indicators and objectives outlined in this document are focused on this specific period, prioritizing short-term goals. Since we are not setting long-term objectives at this stage, the primary goal is to raise awareness of the concept of gender equality among the partnership and all project stakeholders.

2. Analysis phase: state of play and areas for improvement

COST nourishes open networks of excellence in all scientific domains and aims to be the leading networking instrument in the European Research Area (ERA). To achieve this goal, research and innovation excellence is an absolute requirement. Promoting excellence and quality throughout all our activities while providing equal opportunities for all is a prerequisite. As such COST wants to improve gender balance in COST Actions and its other activities, and on all levels, in the fields where either men or women are underrepresented. Studies have shown that diverse teams are more innovative, and that gender diversity can lead to better research outcomes. In striving to achieve gender equality in the activities of the COST Actions, the full potential of excellence can be reached.

The current state of gender statistics within the COST Actions demonstrates a commendable level of gender balanced representation across various roles and activities. Only for the COST Action Chair position men are still in majority.

Empowering and retaining young researchers and innovators is also a strategic priority of COST, offering opportunities for networking and personal contact with more experienced researchers and innovators. To date, among young participants, there are equal numbers of men and women.

The high number of women researchers and innovators participating in COST Actions and adopting leadership positions places COST in a very good position to promote good practise. Some COST Actions are addressing gender balance from different perspectives, also in fields traditionally mostly occupied by men. There are also fields of research that have generally attracted mostly women and could benefit from more men researchers. Even research fields attracting a high number of women researchers often suffer from a lack of women in leadership positions. Regardless of which gender prevails in a particular field, such inequality is harmful to the research endeavour. There is a need for more role models in some research fields, so as to achieve gender balance and improve career continuation. Here COST can play an important role by providing opportunities for training as well as role models and mentoring schemes.

There are two main challenges regarding gender balance in COST activities:

1. Even though the number of women and men in the Actions are equal, there are still fewer women Action Chairs;
2. Looking into different fields of research there is still a clear gender divide – resulting in a majority of men in some COST Actions and a majority of women in others.

The gender balance in COST's evaluation activities has so far not been in the focus of COST's reporting. However, in order to ensure women participation is as equal as possible across all activities, thorough statistics on the ratio will now be gathered and reported.

State of play of women representation in COST Actions*:

The data on gender representation within COST Actions highlights a strong presence of women across various roles, indicating progress toward gender equality. Here's a detailed overview of the current distribution, including specific figures from the Profeedback COST Action:

- **Overall Representation:** COST Actions, on average, have 49% women participants. Within the Profeedback COST Action, this figure is even higher, with women representing 58% of participants (148 women compared to 107 men). This balance underscores a commitment to inclusivity within the Actions, especially in the Profeedback Action.
- **Leadership Roles:** Women hold 52% of leadership positions in COST Actions. Specifically, in the Profeedback COST Action, 24 out of 41 Management Committee (MC) members are women, compared to 17 men, and in the Core Group, women and men are equally represented, with 5 each. This distribution reflects significant gender inclusivity in decision-making roles within COST Actions, especially evident in Profeedback.
- **Action Chair and Vice-Chair Positions:** Across COST Actions, women make up 43% of Action Chairs and 56% of Action Vice-Chairs. However, in the Profeedback COST Action, both the Action Chair and Vice-Chair roles are held by men. This reflects some variation within specific Actions but emphasizes ongoing efforts in COST Actions to improve gender balance in key leadership positions.
- **Young Researchers:** In COST Actions, women constitute 53% of young participants, while in the Profeedback COST Action, this figure reaches 60% (with 65 out of 107 young participants being female). This positive trend demonstrates an emphasis on supporting gender balance among early-career researchers.
- **Inclusiveness Target Country (ITC) Participation:** Women represent 57% of ITC participants in COST Actions overall. In the Profeedback COST Action, this participation level is even higher, with women making up 60% of ITC participants (105 out of 175). This strong representation underscores a commitment to gender balance, particularly in initiatives focused on inclusiveness in less research-intensive countries.

3. GEP implementation plan

In its commitment to fostering an inclusive research environment, COST has outlined key steps for implementing Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) across its Actions. These guidelines emphasize the importance of gender balance in research networks, leadership, and activities, setting a standard for gender equality within COST initiatives. The Profeedback COST Action draws on this framework as it establishes its own GEP, with the following strategic measures guiding its implementation:

1. The COST Administration will mention the importance of the GEP for COST activities at the first Management Committee meeting of the Action, and repeatedly at the other main activities organised of the Action;
2. The COST Administration will highlight the importance of ensuring a gender balance in research networks, as well as appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research networking and the importance of a gender balanced leadership team;
3. The COST Administration will encourage the nomination of a Gender Equality Advisor within the COST Action;
4. The COST Administration will encourage the organisation of Action events with a gender focus;
5. The COST Administration will encourage the development of a COST Action Gender Equality Plan. In order to assist Actions that wish to develop a GEP, COST will provide a short template in the course of this year;

6. The COST Administration will point new COST Actions to existing initiatives such as [Gendered Innovations](#) and the [GEAR Tool](#);
7. The COST Administration will encourage Action members to sign up for the COST Gender Equality Community, a peer-to-peer platform,¹ and the Gendered Innovations' mailing list² for the latest gender-related news.
8. The COST Administration will encourage COST Actions to cite and link in their publications to EU gender equality initiatives;
9. The COST Administration will, on a regular basis, inform the COST Actions on relevant developments at European level regarding gender-related topics and developments;
10. The COST Administration will monitor the status of gender balance within COST Actions, and recommend that Actions include 'gender equality matters' as a recurring agenda item at their Management Committee meetings;
11. The COST Administration will encourage COST Actions to use gender inclusive language in their internal and external network communication in order to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias;³
12. The COST Action will actively explore ways in which additional participants from the underrepresented group could be attracted and invited to the COST Action. The COST Administration will collect feedback and best practices from Actions who were successful and share with other COST Actions hoping to reach the same goal.
- 13.

4. Monitoring phase: setting indicators to monitor progress

COST is committed to monitoring progress regarding a number of gender related Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and related Horizon Europe targets. The results of this annual monitoring exercise are published on the dedicated [COST gender equality web page](#).

This section gives an overview of the state of play regarding women representation in COST Actions, linked to COST Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and their specific targets for Horizon Europe. As the main ambition of this Gender Equality Plan is to achieve gender balance in the COST Actions, additional monitoring on the level of individual COST Action will be performed.

KPI	State of Play (<i>June 2023</i>)	Target for Horizon Europe	KPI Profeedback Action
Share of women researchers and innovators in COST Actions	49% of women representation in COST Actions	50%	49%
Share of leadership positions occupied by women researchers	52% of leadership positions occupied by women researchers <i>NB: 37% of the Chairs and 49% of the Vice-Chairs are women</i>	50%	0%

Share of women among the young researchers and innovators participating in COST Actions	55% of the total young participants in COST Actions are women	50%	61%
Share of women researchers and innovators coming from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC)	57% of ITC participants in COST Actions are women	50%	60%

Category	Female	Male	Total	Percentage of Female
By Institution Type				
University	86	146	232	37%
SME	1	4	5	20%
Research Institution	30	55	85	35%
Consultancy Firm	6	2	8	75%
Governmental Body (Ministry)	2	2	4	50%
Governmental Institution	6	1	7	85%
NGO	9	6	15	60%
Multinational Cooperation	0	1	1	0%
Young Researchers			106	61%
By Region				
Western EU	9	3	12	75%
Eastern EU	18	15	33	54%
Northern EU	3	2	5	60%
Widening Countries	30	22	52	57%
Working Group Gender Distribution				
WG1	44	24	68	64%
WG2	29	22	51	56%
WG3	45	24	69	65%

In the analysis phase, we monitored the current membership composition within the working groups (WG1, WG2, WG3) and compiled statistics on gender distribution.

Among **young researchers**, women make up 61% of the total, with 65 females and 41 males participating in this category.

Looking at the gender distribution **by region**, Western EU countries lead with 75% female representation among their young researchers (9 out of 12), while Eastern EU countries have 54% (18 females out of 33 researchers). Northern EU countries show a 60% female presence among their young researchers, with 3 out of 5 being women. In widening countries, 57% of young researchers are female, comprising 30 women out of 52 participants.

Examining the gender composition within the **working groups (WGs)**, WG1 shows a solid female representation of 64%, with 44 women and 24 men. WG2 has 56% female representation, consisting of 29 women and 22 men. WG3 also maintains a strong female presence at 65%, with 45 women and 24 men among its members.

The analysis of gender representation across **various institutions** reveals significant disparities. In universities, only 37% of participants are female, with 86 women compared to 146 men. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) show an even lower representation of women, at just 20%, with only 1 woman among 4 men. Research institutions reflect a slightly better situation, with 35% female representation, consisting of 30

women and 55 men.

However, consultancy firms demonstrate a much more favorable gender balance, boasting 75% female representation, with 6 women and only 2 men. Governmental bodies, including ministries, show a balanced representation of 50% each for women and men. A governmental institution has an impressive 85% female representation, with 6 women and 1 man. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also reflect a strong female presence, with 60% of their members being women (9 out of 15). In stark contrast, multinational cooperations lack female representation entirely, with 1 male participant and no females.

5. Implementation of the Gender Equality Plan

5.1. Ensuring a gender balance in the remaining phase of the Action

Three key focus points define our intention in implementing this Gender Equality Plan

1. Enhancing Leadership and Partner Capacity in Understanding the Importance of Gender Balance

Our aim is to foster a comprehensive understanding of gender balance among leaders and project partners, emphasizing its role in creating an inclusive and productive research environment. This includes:

- **Awareness Training:** Conducting workshops and training sessions that highlight the benefits of gender-balanced teams, showcase successful examples, and explore strategies for achieving gender equity in leadership roles and decision-making.
- **Capacity Building in Gender-Sensitive Practices:** Providing resources and tools that enable project partners to integrate gender considerations during the implementation of project activities, helping them recognize gender biases and address them effectively.

2. Developing Monitoring Tools to Assess Gender Balance in Project Activities, Events, and Outcomes

To ensure that gender equality efforts are measurable and sustained, we will establish robust monitoring tools that can be applied consistently across events, activities, and various project phases. Key actions include:

- **Comprehensive Data Collection and Analysis:** Designing tools that collect quantitative and qualitative data on gender balance across all project events, team compositions, and leadership roles, with particular attention to intersectional aspects (e.g., age, professional background).
- **Dashboard and Reporting Mechanism:** Creating a centralized reporting system where data on gender balance is accessible, enhancing accountability and transparency among project leaders and stakeholders.
- **Continuous Feedback Mechanism:** Setting up regular feedback loops where project partners and participants can share experiences and suggestions on gender equality, ensuring that the monitoring tools evolve and stay relevant for future projects.

3. Leveraging Lessons Learned from This Gender Equality Plan to Inform Future Projects

Building on the insights and outcomes of this GEP, we aim to create a foundation for sustained gender equality efforts in future initiatives. Actions in this focus area include:

- **Documentation of Best Practices and Challenges:** Systematically documenting successful strategies, encountered challenges, and unexpected impacts to create a repository of best practices that future projects can access.

- **Developing a Gender Equality Guideline Document:** Creating a guideline document that integrates lessons learned, specific indicators, and recommended strategies to foster gender equality in future projects, making it easy for new teams to adopt and build upon previous efforts.

5.2. Action Plan and Monitoring

Objective 1: Supporting change towards increasing gender equality in Profeedback network

1. Special Objective: Nominating a Gender Equality Advisor

The establishment of the position of a Gender Equality Advisor is a key step in promoting gender equality within the Profeedback network. This role will be instrumental in guiding initiatives aimed at enhancing gender balance and ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of the network's activities.

2. Special Objective: Establishing a Gender Equality Working Group (GE WG)

To further support our commitment to gender equality, we will form a dedicated Gender Equality Working Group (Profeedback GE WG). This group will consist of diverse members who will collaborate to develop and implement strategies for promoting gender balance within the network.

3. Special Objective: General Recommendations for Increasing and Sustaining Gender Balance

To effectively raise awareness and promote a more equitable gender representation within the Profeedback network, the following general recommendations will be formulated:

Activities and Indicators for Measuring Progress

Activities	Indicators for measuring activities
1. Establishing the position of the Gender Equality Advisor	Position is established and internally funded Role and responsibilities are clearly defined in a Mandate
2. Establishing a Gender Equality Working Group (Profeedback GE WG)	Mandate indicating the number, roles and responsibilities of the working group members Working groups meets at least 3 times during the project lifetime Meeting minutes and attendance lists are documented.
3. Formulating recommendations for improving gender balance within the Profeedback	Profeedback GE WG formulates recommendations based on the Monitoring Survey results and Data collected on the gender balance of Profeedback events to improve gender balance in leadership group, participation in conferences and publication Recommendations are shared with the Profeedback Network

Objective 2: Raising Awareness of the Importance of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)

1. Special Objective: Familiarizing the Partnership

To enhance understanding and commitment to Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) within the Profeedback

network, we aim to familiarize partners with the importance of gender equality matters.

2.Special Objective: Engaging a Broader Audience

In addition to our partnership, we will work to engage a wider audience, raising awareness about gender equality and its significance in research and innovation.

Activities and Indicators for Measuring Progress

Activities	Indicators for measuring activities
1. MC meeting: presenting GEP to the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members are informed of the Profeedback GEP, Gender Equality Working Group (GE WG), and Gender Advisor. - "Recommend that Actions include 'gender equality matters' as a recurring agenda item at their Management Committee meetings."
2. CG meeting: presenting GEP to the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members are informed of the Profeedback GEP, GE WG, and Gender Advisor.
3. WG meeting: presenting GEP to the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members are informed of the Profeedback GEP, GE WG, and Gender Advisor.
4. Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visibility of the Profeedback GEP is ensured on HÉTFA's website, making information easily accessible to all stakeholders.
5. Sharing relevant news regarding the GEP activities of the COST Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --The COST Administration will regularly inform the COST Action followers of relevant developments at the European level regarding gender-related topics and developments. - Disseminate updates through newsletters or other communication channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, X) to keep partners informed of GEP activities and initiatives. - We will encourage the COST Actions to use gender inclusive language in their internal and external network communication in order to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias;
6. Awareness raising campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop an online campaign featuring one post per week highlighting eight female researchers from the Working Group members, Management Committee (MC), Core Group (CG), and Steering Committee (SC). - Include perspectives from male colleagues on why they consider gender equality important.
7. Capacity Building within the Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a survey to identify topics of interest among partners, leading to the organization of one webinar series based on the findings.

Objective 3: Monitoring Gender Balance in the Research Network & Promoting the Importance of Gender Balance

Special Objective: Promoting and Monitoring Gender Balance

This objective focuses on promoting and monitoring gender balance within key leadership teams, including the Management Committee (MC), Core Group (CG) members, Working Group (WG) members, Scientific Committee, Event organization team, and teams related to the preparation of specific deliverables (e.g., Policy Brief working group).

Activities and Indicators for Measuring Progress

Activities	Indicators for measuring activities
1. Establishing a Gender Balance Monitoring Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Profeedback GE WG designs the monitoring tool (survey), defines key areas to be monitored, and carries out the monitoring during the 2nd meeting of the Profeedback GE WG. - Conduct data collection regarding leadership gender balance in November during GEP preparation and again at the end of the project in September.
2. Survey on Gender Equality in the Scientific Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a survey to assess gender equality perceptions within the scientific community and the importance of the COST Action in improving gender equality. - Aim for at least 30% participation from both genders in the WG by the end of the project in September. - Produce a Gender Equality Report based on survey findings and share it with the Profeedback Network.

Objective 4: Encouraging the Organization of Profeedback Events, Grants, and Opportunities with a Focus on Equal Participation

1. Specific Objective: Monitoring Gender Balance Status

To monitor the status of gender balance at Profeedback events, grants, and opportunities at all levels.

2. Specific Objective: Supporting Equal Participation

To support Profeedback partners in ensuring equal participation of men and women in scientific committees, organizing teams, advisory boards, and other related groups at all levels.

Activities and Indicators for Measuring Progress

Activities	Indicators for measuring activities
1. Creating a Monitoring Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Profeedback Gender Equality Working Group (GE WG) shares the monitoring tool with partners to assess gender balance at events and opportunities.
2. Continuous Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data is collected for each event and grants with a specific focus on gender balance and representation of underrepresented groups (e.g., women, minorities) in attendance and participation.
3. Setting Criteria for Organizing Gender-Balanced Events and Grant Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish criteria or guidelines for organizing events that promote gender balance, including: - Recommendations for attracting

	<p>underrepresented groups in roles such as researchers, evaluators, panelists, scientific committee members, keynote speakers, and moderators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging the inclusion of female participants and ensuring that at least one panel is led by a woman, demonstrating a commitment to gender equity in leadership roles. - Showcase examples of successful gender-balanced events to serve as best practice models for future Profeedback activities.
4. Providing Training and Resources for Event Organizers	- Develop training materials and resources for partners on how to effectively implement gender balance strategies in event planning and execution.

Objective 5 Supporting the incorporation of gender dimension in research

Specific Objective 1 Encouraging partners to including gender perspective in research/projects

This objective focuses on promoting the integration of gender perspectives in research and project development among Profeedback partners. It emphasizes the importance of considering how gender can influence research outcomes, methodologies, and applications. By encouraging partners to incorporate gender analysis into their projects, this initiative aims to enhance the relevance and impact of research findings, ensuring that they address the needs and experiences of diverse populations.

Specific Objective 2 Generating knowledge on 'gender perspective' among the partners

This objective aims to build awareness and understanding of the concept of gender perspective among partners within the Profeedback network. It seeks to equip partners with the necessary knowledge and tools to recognize and address gender-related issues in their research and activities. Through targeted resources, workshops, and information sharing, this objective fosters an environment where gender considerations are valued and integrated into research practices, ultimately leading to more equitable and comprehensive outcomes.

Activities and Indicators for Measuring Progress

1.Promoting the site ' Gendered Innovations to partners'	-Share useful resources from the Gendered Innovations website through newsletters or during meetings to familiarize partners with gender considerations in research.
2.Organizing Workshops	-HÉTFA will deliver a workshop on "How to Ensure the Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation," focusing on practical applications of gender perspectives.
3.Encouragement to Cite EU Gender Equality Initiatives	-The COST Administration will encourage COST Actions to cite and link in their publications to EU gender equality initiatives to reinforce the importance of gender in research.
4.Addressing Gender-Specific Issues in Papers	-Encourage partners to address relevant gender-specific issues in their papers. For instance, reviewers could be prompted to consider specific gender criteria when evaluating submissions.

3. COST statement on sexual harassment

COST fully embraces the general acknowledged principles and definition on sexual harassment, as developed by the [European Institute for Gender Equality](#):

“Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.”

This policy applies to all COST Action activities and participants.

More detailed information on this topic can be found on this dedicated webpage of the [European Institute for Gender Equality](#). An overview with links to findings and resources specific to the research environment, based on EU-funded projects can be found on the [CORDIS](#) webpage.

