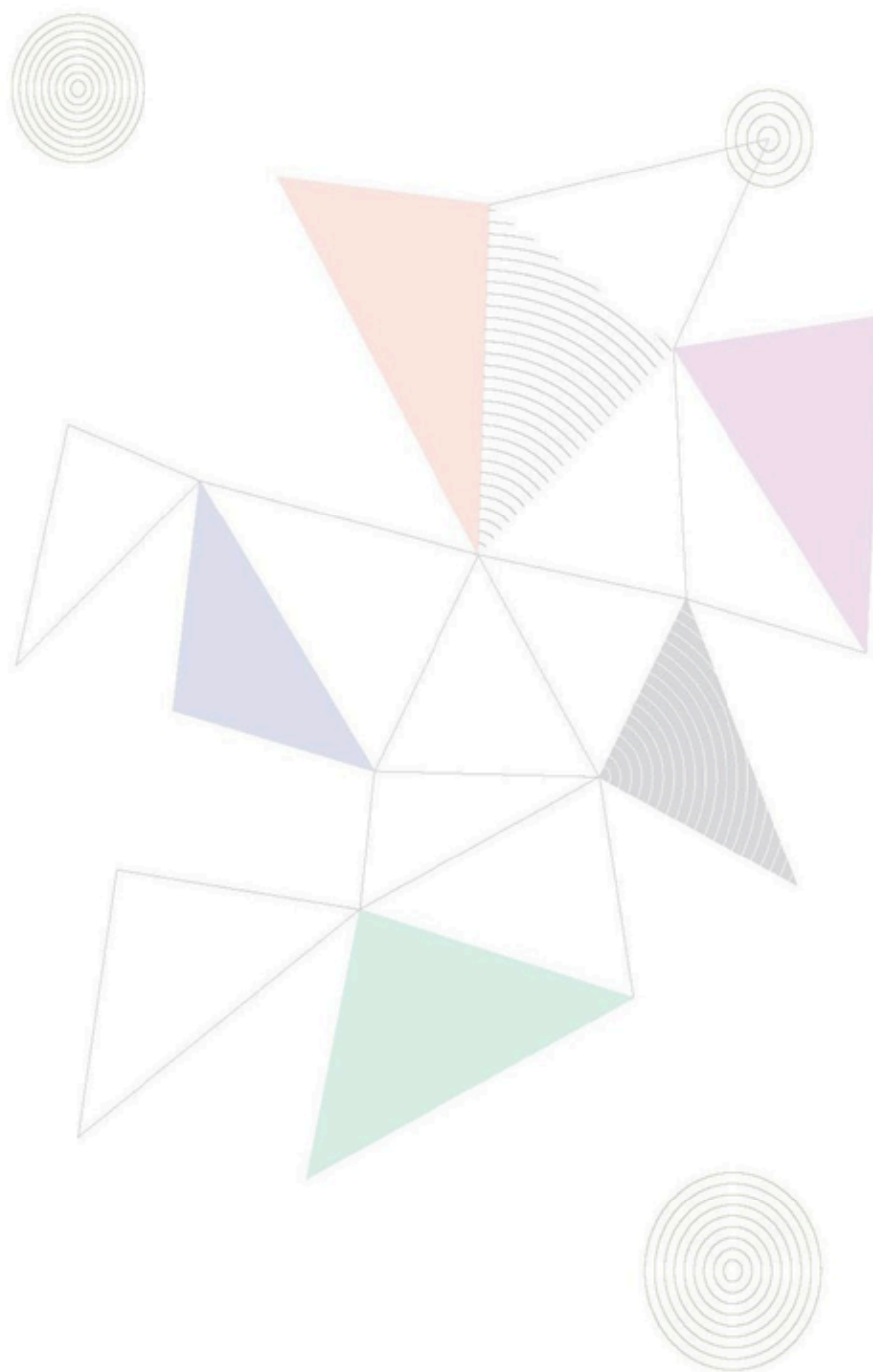


Gender Equality Plan for COST Profeedback Action



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Executive Summary

This report integrates survey findings with Profeedback's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) to highlight current strengths, identify gaps, and recommend actions for the remaining project phase.

Aligned with the Profeedback Gender Equality Plan (GEP), this survey serves as the GEP's monitoring baseline—capturing awareness, leadership balance, perceived barriers, and training needs to inform the GE Advisor/Working Group's KPIs and action plan. The findings in this report are therefore both a compliance deliverable and a decision tool for prioritizing GEP actions.

Methodology

An anonymous, web-based questionnaire was designed to assess gender-equality perceptions and experiences, combining closed-ended items (single choice, multi-select, Likert scales) with open-ended questions. The sampling frame was current Profeedback participants; eligibility required active involvement during fieldwork, and invitations were distributed via internal project channels. Data were collected from 2025-02-21 to 2025-04-28, with one response per participant; duplicate entries were screened out. Closed-ended results are reported as frequencies and percentages (multi-select options counted independently); open-ended responses were thematically summarized using keyword frequency analysis. Where subgroup sizes permitted confidentiality, results were segmented by self-identified gender and by Working Group.

Respondent Profile

Gender

A total of 19 people responded, of which 11 (57.9%) identified as female and 8 (42.1%) as male; the survey was sent to 293 individuals, with a female-to-male ratio of 167:126 (57.0% vs 43.0%).

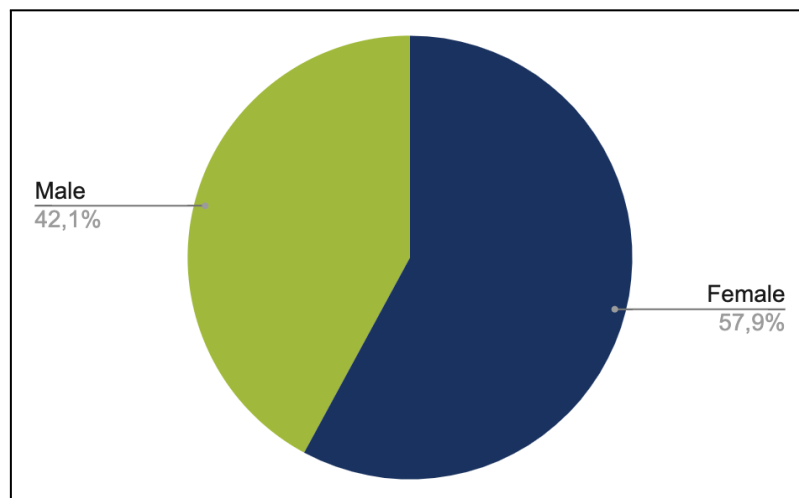


Figure 1. Gender distribution of respondents (n = 19)

This distribution shows that the majority of respondents were women, but the proportion of men was also significant, making the sample relatively balanced. Such a balance is less common in gender equality-focused surveys, where women often represent a much larger share of respondents.

Age

Most participants were aged 35–44 (36.8%), followed by 25–34 (21.1%), 55–64 (15.8%), 45–54 (15.8%), and 65 or older (10.5%), the gender ratio of age groups is shown on *figure 2*.

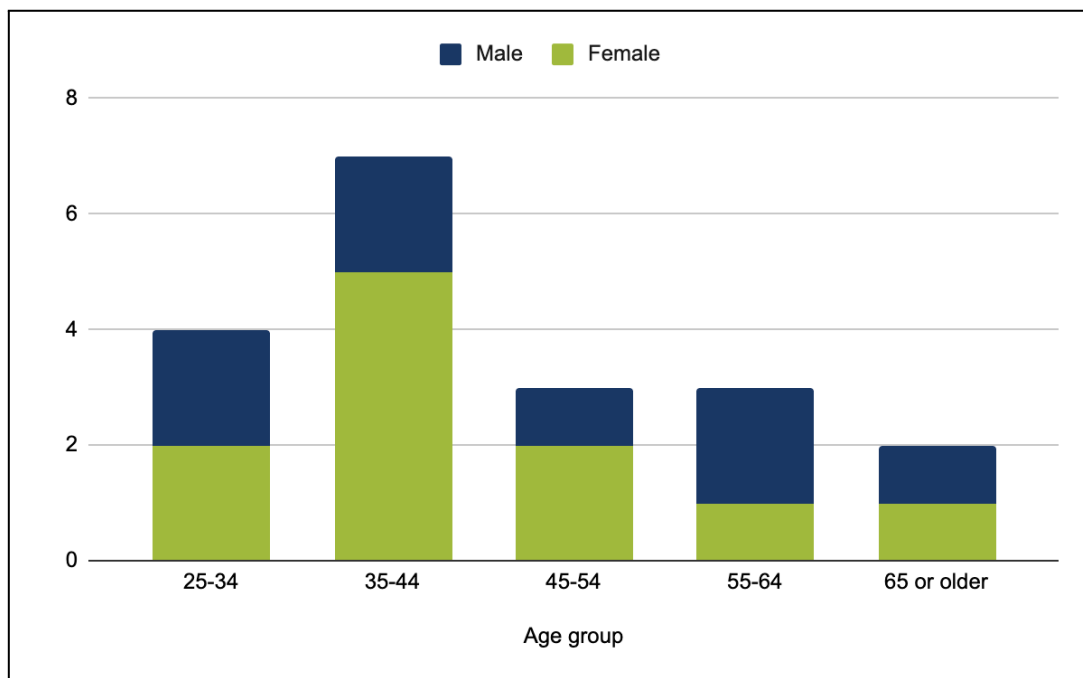


Figure 2. Gender ratio by age group of respondents

Nationality

The largest share came from Hungary (26.3%), followed by Greece (10.5%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (10.5%), and several countries each represented by a single respondent, including Sweden, Türkiye, Italy, the Czech Republic, and others.

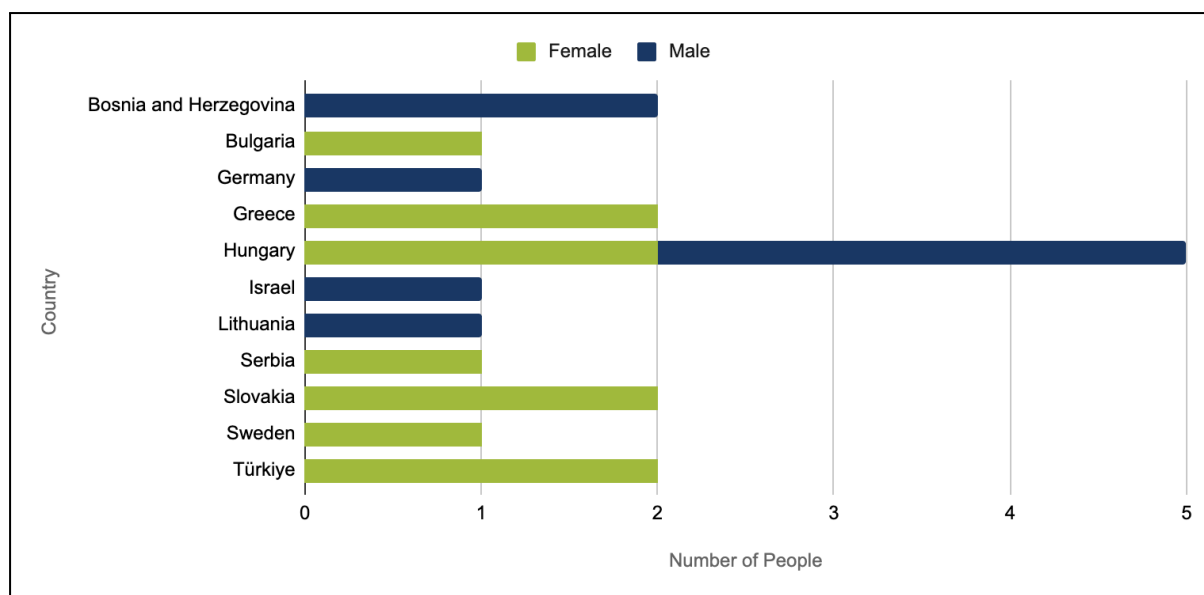


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by country

With members representing 44 countries, this wide geographical spread reflects the international nature of the Profeedback project and ensures that feedback on gender equality is informed by diverse national and cultural contexts. The strong presence from Hungary likely relates to the project's coordination and partner network based there.

Professional Affiliation

The fourth question — **"What is your current position and/or job title within your organization?"** — was answered by all 19 participants. Grouping the responses into broader categories gives the following breakdown:

- **Academic Staff:** 6 respondents (31.6%)
- **Research Staff:** 4 respondents (21.1%)
- **Management / Leadership:** 3 respondents (15.8%)
- **Consultancy / Advisory:** 1 respondent (5.3%)
- **Administrative / Support:** 1 respondent (5.3%)
- **Other:** 4 respondents (21.1%)

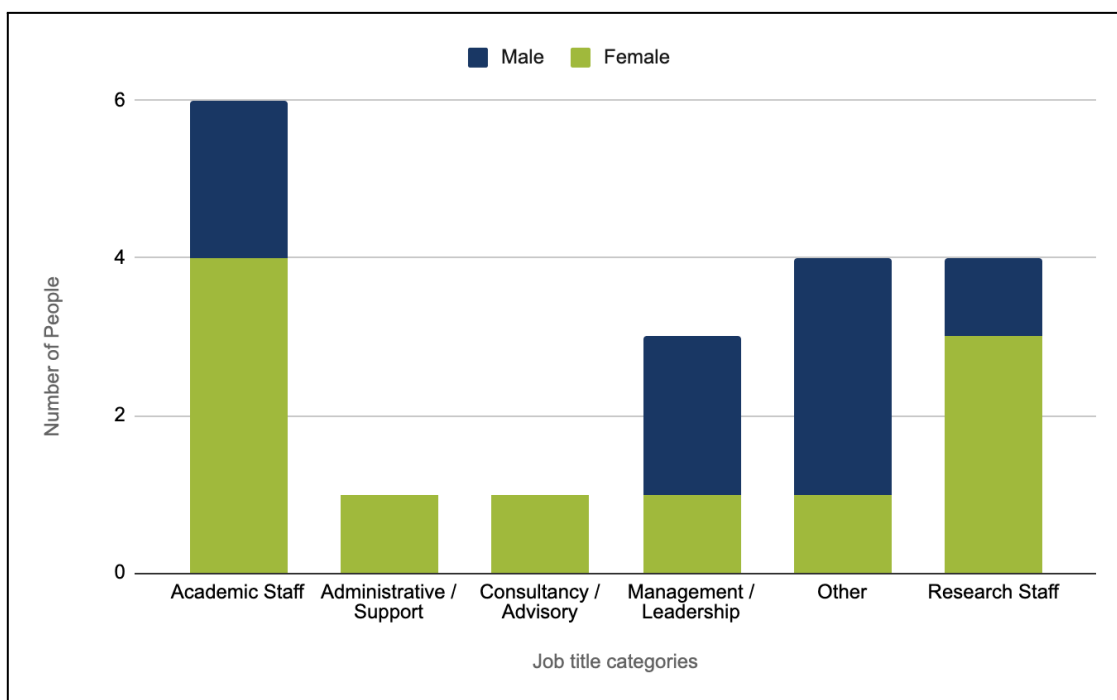


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by job title/position

Of the 19 participants, the distribution of institutional affiliation or background was as follows:

- Academic institution: 10 respondents (52.6%)
- Research institute: 6 respondents (31.6%)
- Corporate sector (private company): 2 respondents (10.5%)
- International organization: 1 respondent (5.3%)

The majority of respondents are affiliated with academic or research institutions, which together account for over 80% of the sample.

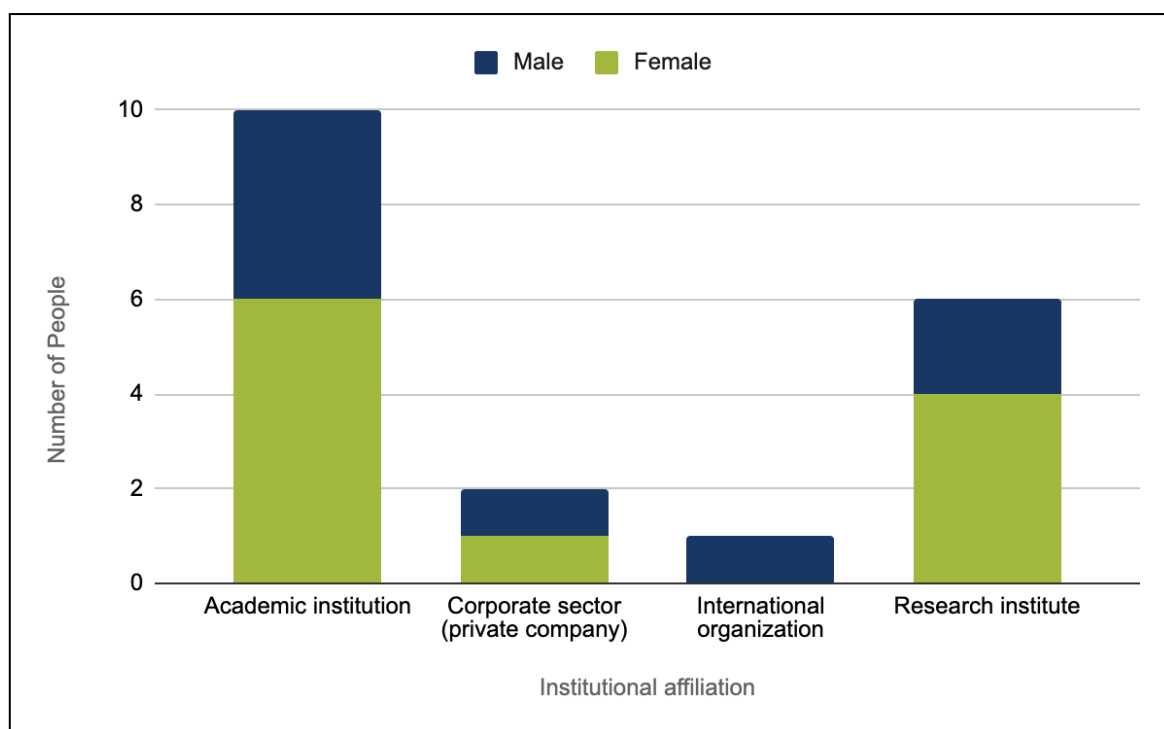


Figure 6. Institutional affiliation of respondents

More than half of the survey participants are members of Working Group 1, nearly as many belong to Working Group 2, while only one respondent is in Working Group 3.

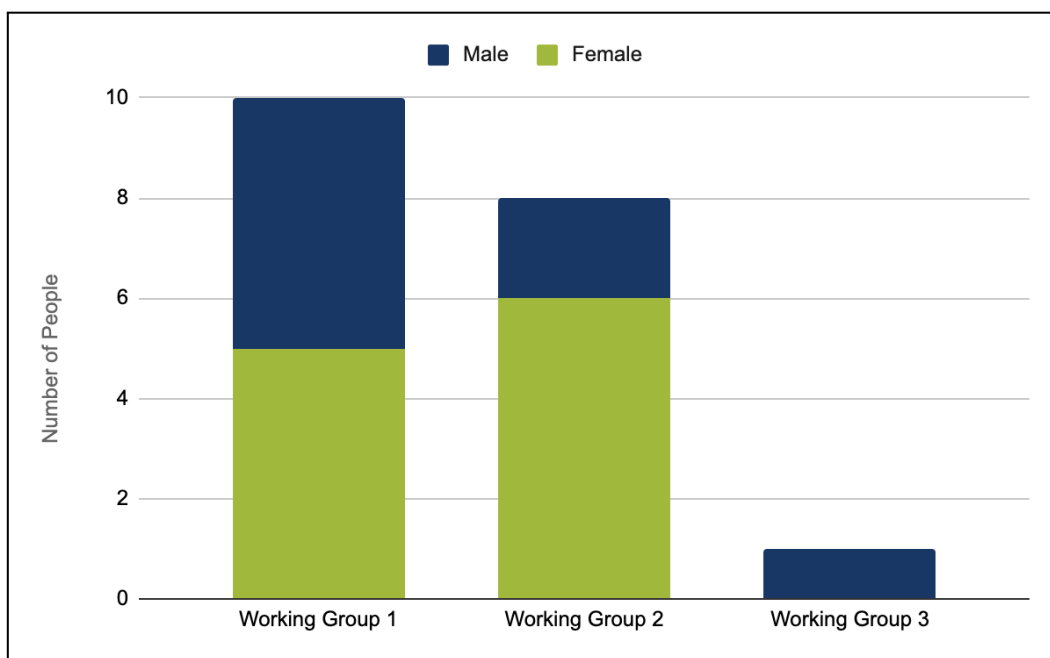


Figure 5. Distribution of respondents by Profefeedback Working Groups

Gender in Profeedback

For the question **"To what extent do you believe gender equality principles are upheld within the project?"** (rated on a 1–5 scale), the 19 participants responded as follows:

- **5:** 13 respondents (68.4%)
- **4:** 4 respondents (21.1%)
- **3:** 1 respondent (5.3%)
- **2:** 1 respondent (5.3%)

The average rating was **4.53**, with scores ranging from 2 to 5. This indicates that most respondents perceive the Profeedback project as strongly upholding gender equality principles, with only isolated lower ratings suggesting room for improvement.

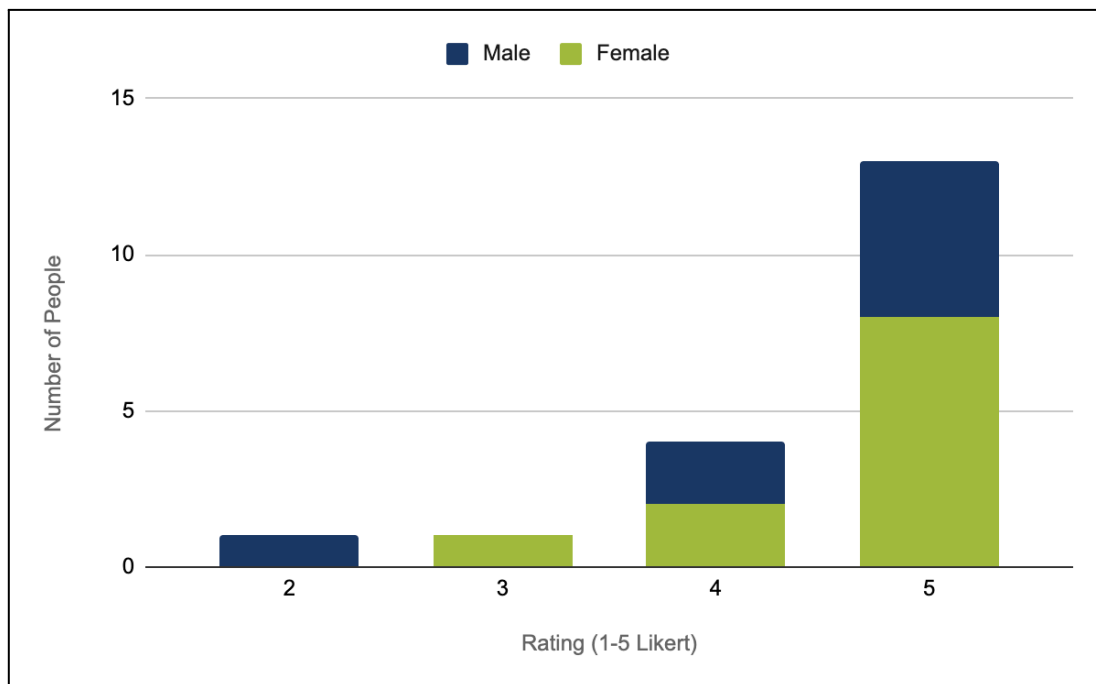


Figure 7. Perceived extent to which gender equality principles are upheld in the project

For the question **"To what extent do you feel the project owner/leadership is committed to promoting gender equality?"** (rated on a 1–5 scale), the 19 participants responded as follows:

- **5:** 11 respondents (57.9%)
- **4:** 7 respondents (36.8%)
- **2:** 1 respondent (5.3%)

The average rating was **4.47**, with scores ranging from 2 to 5. Overall, the results reflect a strong perception of leadership commitment to gender equality, with most respondents giving high ratings and only one expressing a lower level of confidence.

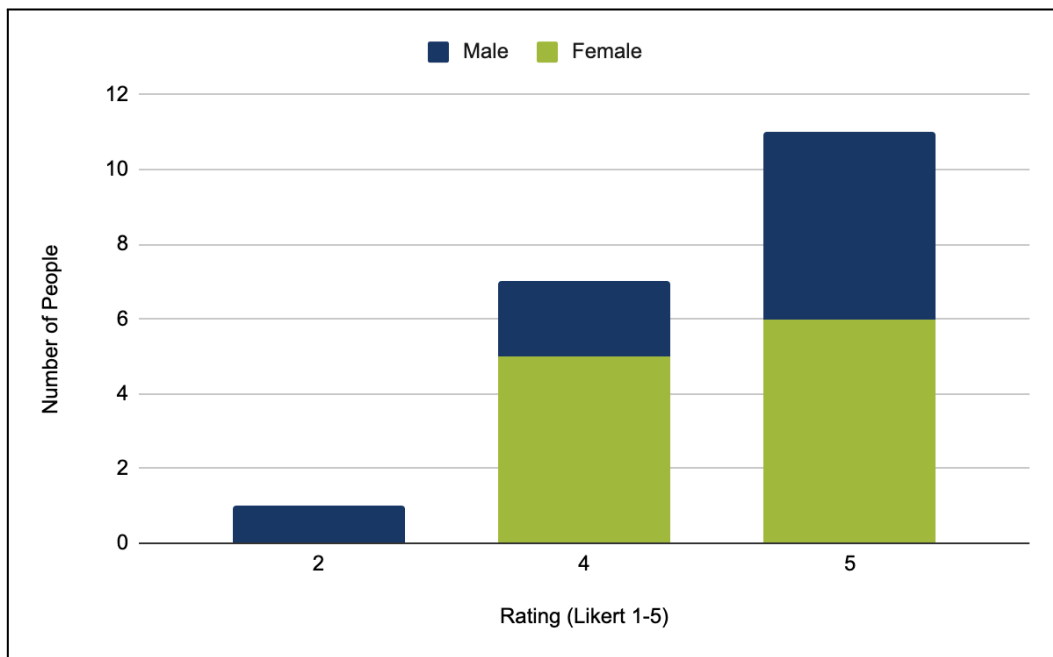


Figure 8. Perceived commitment of project leadership to promoting gender equality

For the question "**How do you perceive the treatment of gender-related topics/issues within the Profeedback project?**", the qualitative responses can be grouped as follows:

- **Positive:** 47.4% — praising effective integration of gender aspects, structured measures, and inclusive practices.
 - *“The Profeedback project effectively integrates gender-related topics through its Gender Equality Plan. Gender-based selection in working groups, leadership positions, publications, and conferences is an important aspect of promoting diversity.”*
 - *“It’s a very high level and it’s a field that other actions can and should learn from.”*
 - *“I perceive that the PROFEEDBACK project addresses gender-related topics through its commitment to inclusiveness, diversity, and cross-sectoral collaboration. The project’s explicit emphasis on involving stakeholders regardless of age, gender, education level, or working experience demonstrates a strong intention to promote gender equality and ensure broad participation. Additionally, the project’s openness to engaging civil society, including NGOs and end-users, provides further opportunities for integrating gender perspectives into policy evaluation practices. While gender is not the primary focus of the project, the structural inclusivity approach creates a platform where gender-related issues can naturally be considered and discussed within broader policy evaluation frameworks.”*

- **Neutral:** 36.8% — indicating no strong opinion, equal treatment, or interest without detailed assessment.
 - *“Sufficient”*
 - *“I havent seen any issues”*
 - *“In proper manner”*
- **Negative/Unclear:** 15.8% — vague, minimal, or unclear answers, sometimes expressing uncertainty about the question’s meaning.
 - *“Unclear what the survey means: gender related research topics? Or promoting gender equality among the researchers of the project”*
 - *“No opinion”*

This distribution shows that nearly half of the respondents explicitly view the project’s gender-related efforts positively, while over one-third remain neutral, and a smaller portion provided unclear feedback.

For the question **"Are you aware of the fact Profeedback has a Gender Equality Plan?"**, the responses from the 19 participants were:

- **Yes:** 17 respondents (89.5%)
- **No:** 2 respondents (10.5%)

This shows a high level of awareness among participants about the existence of the Gender Equality Plan, indicating that communication on this matter has been effective for most members. However, the small proportion unaware of the plan suggests there is still room for improvement in ensuring that all project participants are fully informed.

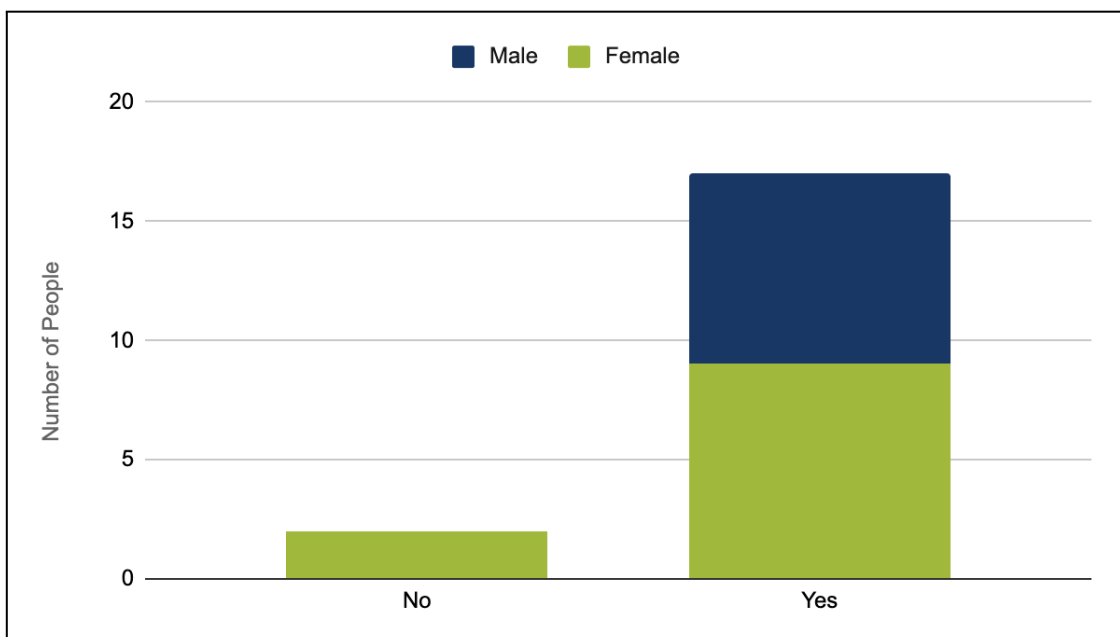


Figure 9. Awareness of the existence of the Profeedback Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

For the question "**Did you receive adequate encouragement, invitations, or support to take on a leadership or deputy leadership role (including WG leadership, or any other positions) within the project?**", 17 participants responded:

- **Yes:** 14 respondents (82.4%)
- **No:** 3 respondents (17.6%)

The majority felt they had sufficient encouragement and support to take on leadership roles, suggesting that the project fosters opportunities for participation in decision-making positions. However, nearly one-fifth reported not receiving such support, indicating that further efforts could be made to ensure inclusivity in leadership opportunities for all members.

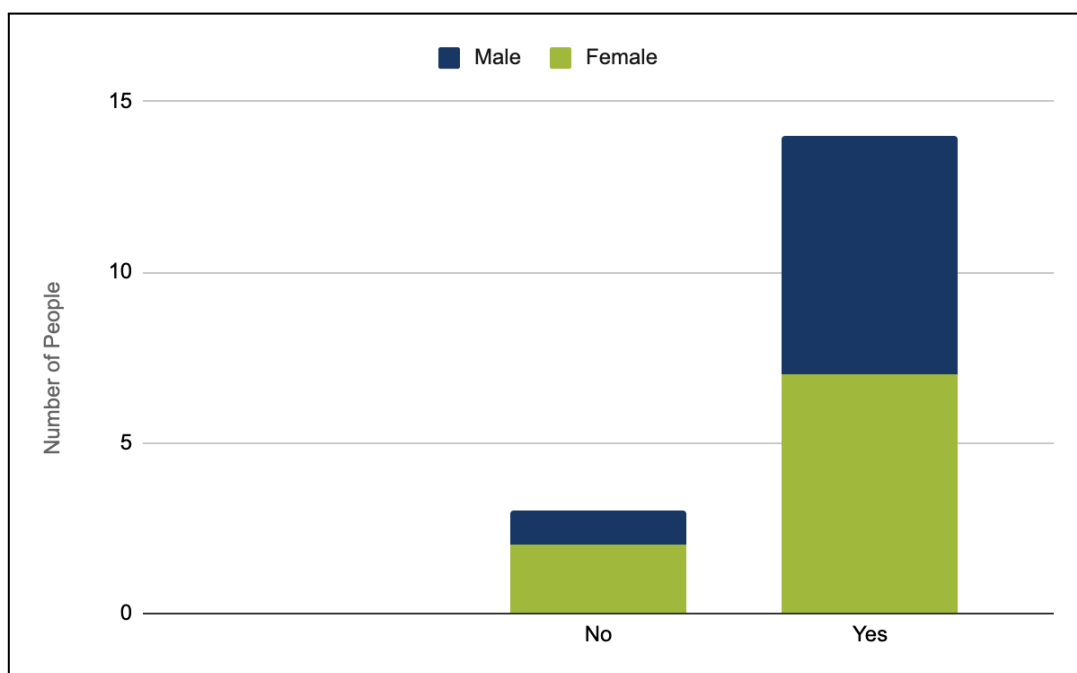


Figure 10. Encouragement and support received for leadership or deputy roles

For the question "Were there any opportunities within the Profeedback project that you wanted to pursue but were unable to achieve?", all 19 participants responded:

- **No:** 18 respondents (94.7%)
- **Yes:** 1 respondent (5.3%)

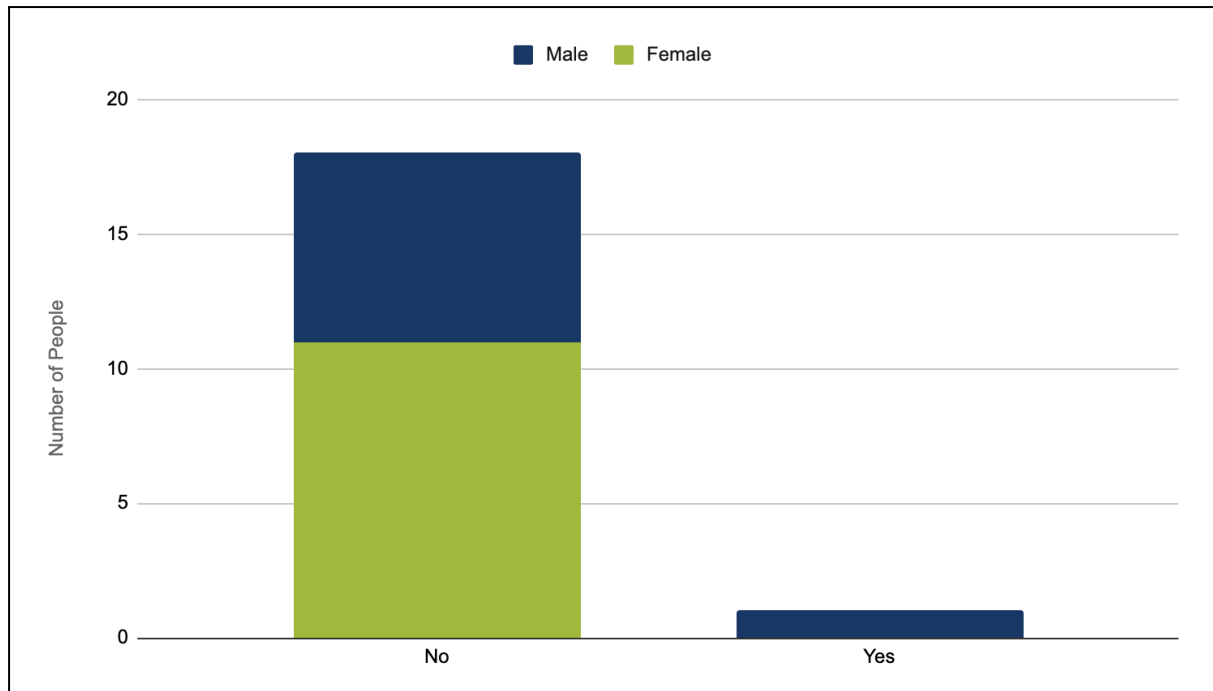


Figure 11. Opportunities participants wanted to pursue but could not

This indicates that almost all participants were able to pursue the opportunities they were interested in within the project. The single “Yes” response suggests an isolated case where barriers existed, but overall, the data reflects a high level of accessibility to opportunities.

For the question "Has the Profeedback project improved your professional competences as a researcher?", the 19 participants responded:

- Yes: 17 respondents (89.5%)
- No: 2 respondents (10.5%)

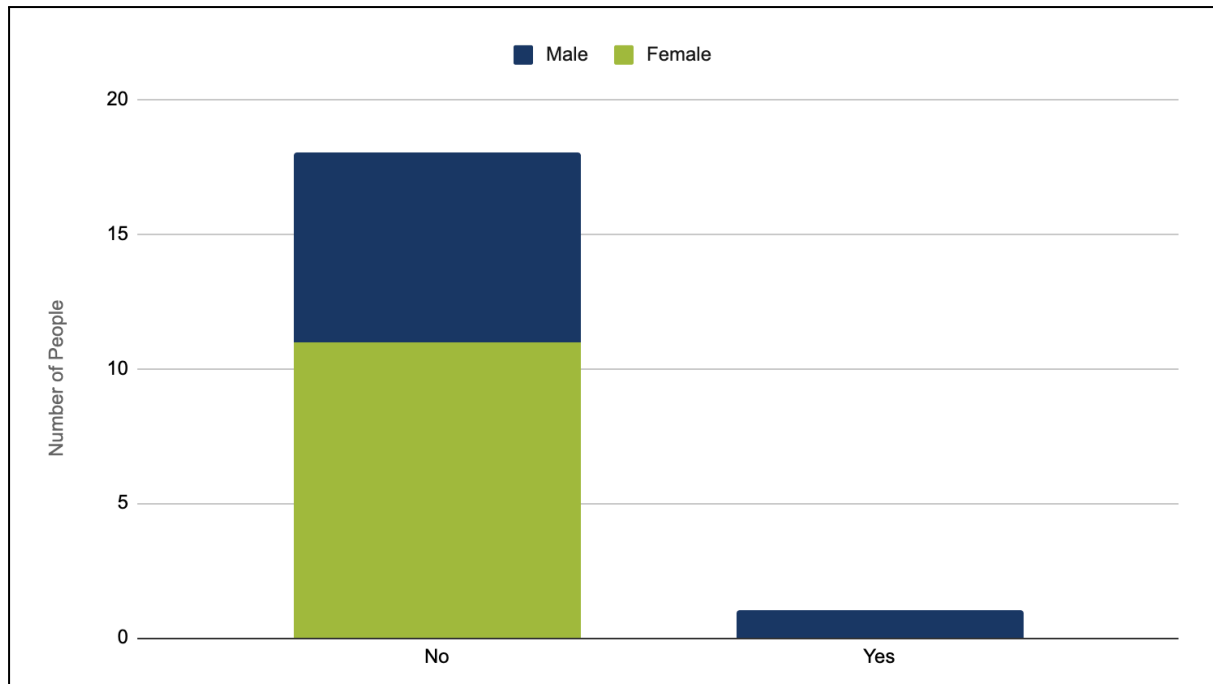


Figure 12. Impact of the project on improving participants' professional competences

This shows that a large majority feel their professional competences have improved through participation in the project, indicating a strong perceived value in terms of skills and knowledge development. The small minority who did not report improvement may already have had established expertise or may not have been directly engaged in competence-building activities.

For the question "Did you receive any opportunities through the project that you would not have had otherwise?", the 19 participants responded:

- Yes: 13 respondents (68.4%)
- No: 6 respondents (31.6%)

This indicates that more than two-thirds of participants gained access to opportunities uniquely provided by the Profeedback project. However, nearly one-third did not, which may suggest that while the project creates valuable openings for many, these benefits are not equally distributed among all members.

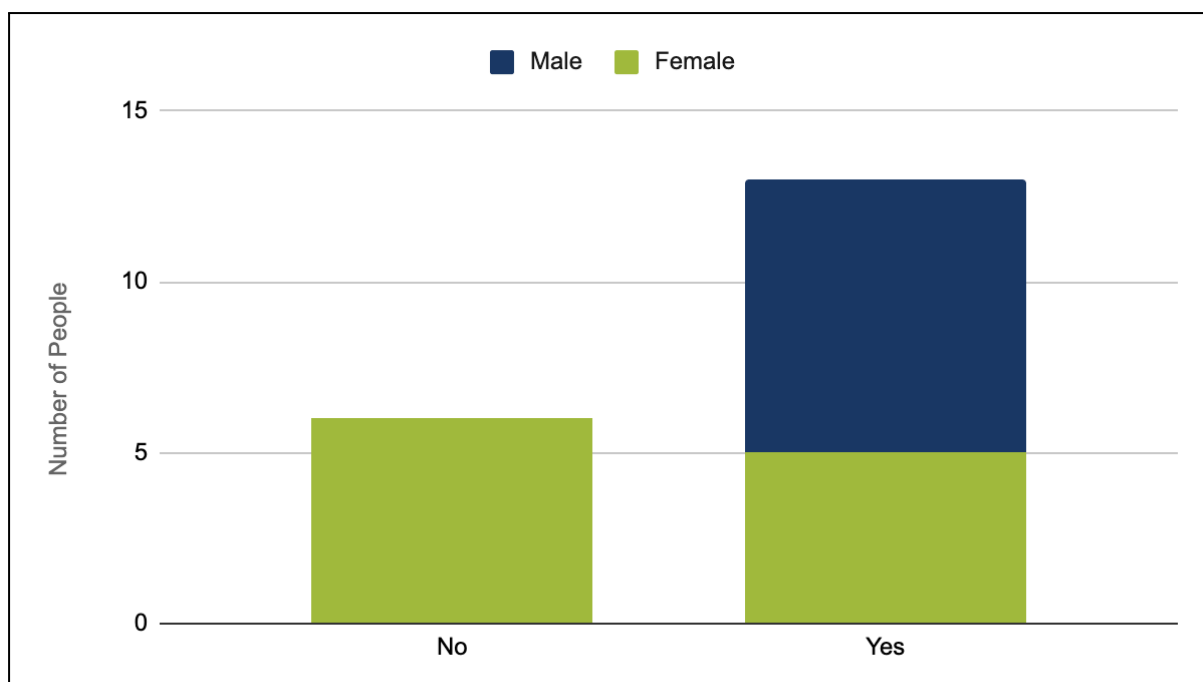


Figure 13. Opportunities provided through the project that would not have been available otherwise

For the question "During your research activities within the COST Action, did you encounter any obstacles that hindered your work?", the 19 participants mentioned a variety of challenges, often in combination:

- **Time constraints** – reported by **63% of respondents** (6 women, 6 men). This was the most frequent barrier and was often compounded by family responsibilities, lack of resources, or personal stress.
- **Family responsibilities** – reported by **21% of respondents** (3 women, 1 man). This obstacle often appeared in combination with time pressures or personal health issues, suggesting that balancing professional and private responsibilities was a significant challenge for several participants.
- **Lack of collaboration opportunities or networks** – reported by **21% of respondents** (3 women, 1 man). In several cases, this was linked to limited guidance from leadership.
- **Other obstacles (each 5% of respondents)** – less frequent but still relevant were:
 - *Administrative challenges* (1 female, 1 male)
 - *Personal health issues or stress* (1 female, 2 male)
 - *Lack of institutional support / bureaucracy* (1 female)
 - *Insufficient funding* (1 female, 1 male)

The most frequent obstacles were related to time limitations and networking opportunities, sometimes compounded by personal or institutional factors. This suggests that while barriers were diverse, improving collaboration mechanisms and addressing workload pressures could have the greatest impact.

For the question **"Would you be interested in participating in an online workshop (approx. 1.5 hours long) about gender equality?"**, the 19 participants responded:

- **Yes:** 8 respondents (42.1%)
- **Maybe:** 5 respondents (26.3%)
- **No:** 6 respondents (31.6%)

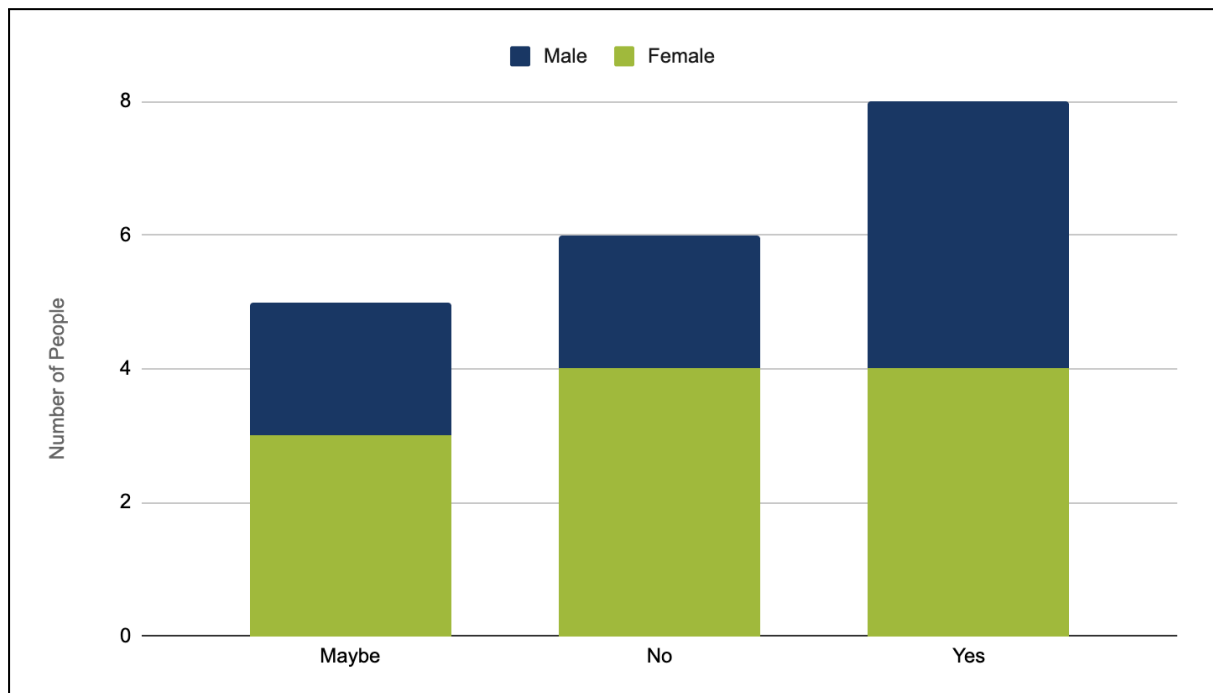


Figure 14. Obstacles encountered by participants during research activities within the COST Action

This shows that interest in such a workshop is relatively high, with more than two-thirds either committed or open to attending.

For the question **"What kind of gender-related topics/areas would you be interested in exploring during the workshop?"**, several participants provided concrete topic suggestions.

All topic-related suggestions included:

- *"I would be interested in exploring topics such as what specific incentives or support mechanisms are provided for women within the project. (...) "*
- *"Work-life balance."*
- *"How the project can be leveraged at institutions to advance gender equality at institutions."*
- *"Work and inequality on the basis of gender."*
- *"Research ethics."*

This pattern shows that while there are clear thematic interests among some participants — particularly around **equal treatment, representation, institutional strategies, and work-life balance**.

For the question "Do you find gender aspects relevant to your research topic?" (rated on a 1–5 scale), all 19 participants responded:

- 3: 7 respondents (36.8%)
- 4: 5 respondents (26.3%)
- 2: 4 respondents (21.1%)
- 5: 3 respondents (15.8%)

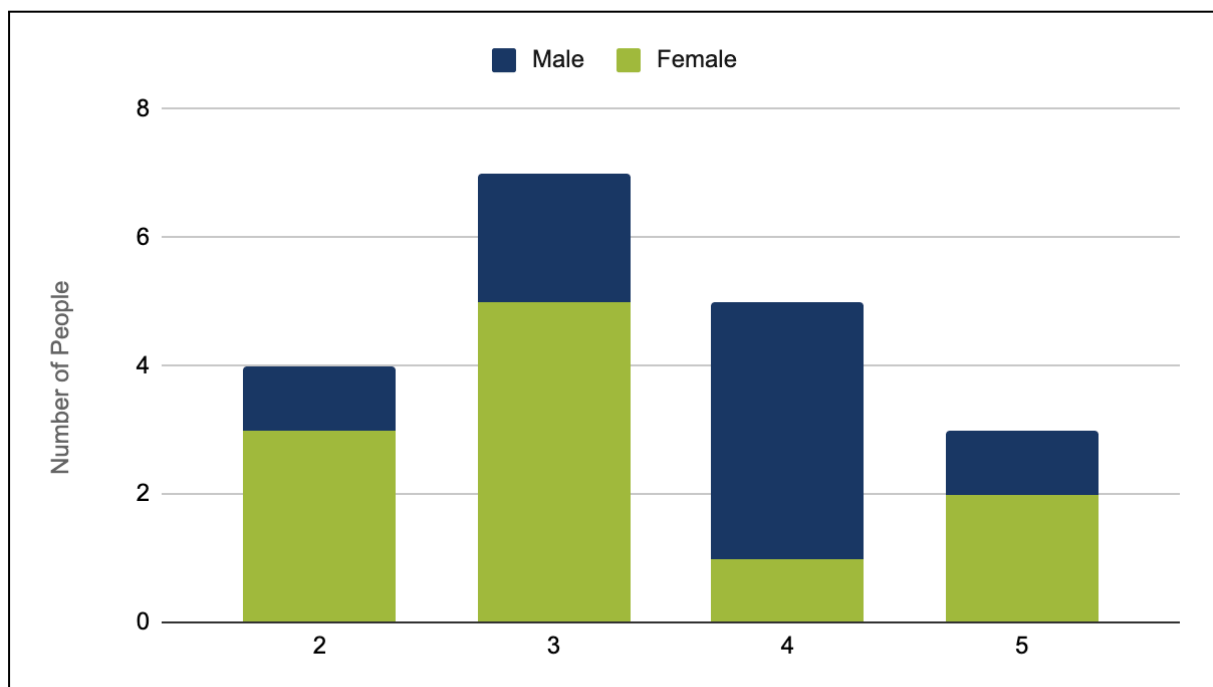


Figure 15. Interest in participating in a gender equality workshop

The average score was 3.37, with ratings ranging from 2 to 5. This suggests a moderate perceived relevance of gender aspects to respondents' research topics. While a portion of participants see strong relevance (scores 4–5), many are in the mid-range, and over one-fifth rated it relatively low (score 2), indicating that for some research areas gender aspects may not be a central consideration.

For the question "Have you integrated gender aspects into your research focus? If yes, how?", participants gave a wide range of responses, from clear examples of integration to outright "no" answers.

Examples of integration provided:

- *"Yes, in RTDI evaluations by assessing gender equality in grant allocations."*

- *“Partly; feminist foreign policy is a part of my research interest, but is not always foregrounded.”*
- *“Yes, in our research, we integrate gender aspects by examining gender-focused consumer preferences. We analyze how gender differences influence consumer behavior, choices, and attitudes, particularly in the context of policy evaluation or market-oriented studies.”*
- *“Yes. In exploring gender dimensions of entrepreneurship.”*
- *“Eco-feminism”*
- *“I would have more opportunities if I was a man.”*
- *“Yes, by focusing more strongly on evidence, sources etc. in a gender perspective.”*
- *“Yes, encouraging education, skill works.”*

Overall, the data shows that while many participants have actively integrated gender aspects into their research — sometimes in highly specific ways — a considerable portion have not, either due to topic irrelevance, lack of opportunity, or early-stage engagement.

For the question **“What measures could be implemented to encourage more women to take on active roles as research leaders, working group leaders, or in other professional activities within the COST Action projects in general?”**, the vast majority of respondents suggested recurring themes.

Most frequently mentioned measures:

1. **Mentorship programs for women researchers** — 52.6% (5 female, 5 male)
2. **Gender awareness-raising programs targeting all participants** — 57.8% (5 female, 6 male)
3. **Leadership training and skills development workshops** — 26.3% (4 female, 1 male)
4. **Targeted funding opportunities or grants for women researchers** — 15.8% (2 female, 1 male)

The data shows a strong consensus around mentorship and awareness-raising as the primary strategies, with additional emphasis on leadership skills training and dedicated funding support. This alignment suggests that implementing a few well-targeted measures could address most participants’ priorities for increasing women’s active participation in leadership roles.

Overall Conclusion

The Profeedback Gender Equality Questionnaire results indicate that **gender equality is perceived as a core value within the project**, with high levels of satisfaction in both principles and practice.

Most participants reported that gender equality principles are upheld (**average score 4.53/5**) and that project leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting these values (**average 4.47/5**).

The feedback reflects a **balanced gender distribution** among respondents (57.9% female, 42.1% male), broad geographic representation, and diversity in roles — from academic and research staff to management and consultancy. This variety in perspectives strengthens the credibility of the survey findings, as the results are informed by individuals with different levels of decision-making power and types of professional experience.

Participation in the project is associated with clear professional benefits:

- **89.5%** of respondents reported an improvement in professional competences.
- **68.4%** gained opportunities they would not have had otherwise.
- **82.4%** felt encouraged to take on leadership positions.

These statistics point to a project environment that is generally **empowering and supportive**, particularly in terms of opening doors to leadership and growth.

Key Strengths

1. High Awareness of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Nearly nine in ten respondents (89.5%) knew that the project had a GEP, suggesting effective communication of its existence and purpose. This is an important foundation for embedding gender considerations in all aspects of project activity.

2. Strong Support for Women's Leadership

The majority of participants felt encouraged to take on leadership or deputy leadership roles. Proposed measures to further support women — such as **mentorship programmes** (63.2%), **gender awareness training** (63.2%), **leadership skills development** (26.3%), and **targeted funding** (15.8%) — confirm that the project has already built trust in this area and has a clear roadmap for enhancement.

3. Positive Perception of Gender-Related Practices

Almost half (47.4%) gave explicitly positive feedback on how gender-related topics are treated, mentioning structured actions like gender-balanced leadership and stakeholder inclusion.

Areas for Improvement

1. Increase Engagement with Gender in Research

While some participants have deeply integrated gender aspects into their research (42.1%), over half have not. Average relevance scores (3.37/5) indicate that many see only moderate connections between gender and their research topics.

Recommendation:

- Provide tailored guidance and practical examples on integrating gender analysis into diverse research fields.
- Highlight case studies where gender considerations have improved research outcomes.
- Offer short thematic training sessions during regular project meetings to maintain engagement.

2. Ensure Equal Access to Leadership Opportunities

Although most respondents felt supported, 17.6% did not. Even small gaps in perception can translate into disengagement or underrepresentation.

Recommendation:

- Introduce transparent nomination and selection processes for leadership roles.
- Encourage rotation of leadership responsibilities to build capacity across the team.
- Pair aspiring leaders with experienced mentors for role-shadowing.

3. Design More Targeted Gender Equality Workshops

Interest in a workshop was significant (42.1% Yes, 26.3% Maybe), but one-third were not interested. Topics suggested by respondents ranged from equal treatment, work–life balance, and research ethics to institutional strategies and women’s representation in leadership.

4. Maintain and Communicate Good Practices

The positive feedback on the GEP and gender-balanced practices should be maintained and promoted both internally and externally.

Recommendation:

- Share success stories (e.g., mentorship outcomes, leadership diversity) in newsletters or project reports.
- Position Profeedback as a model within COST for effective gender equality integration.

Final Outlook

The Profeedback project is in a strong position regarding gender equality, with high satisfaction among participants and an established culture of inclusivity. The existing Gender Equality Plan is well-known and supported, mentorship is valued, and leadership commitment is evident.

By focusing on **deepening gender integration in research**, **removing structural and personal barriers**, and **making gender-related activities more targeted and engaging**, the

project can move from being *perceived as good* to being **recognised as exemplary** in the COST network for gender equality practice.