



Empowering Gender Diversity Guidelines



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Empowering Gender Diversity Guidelines

Stereotypes and biases are still a reality that numerous persons are facing in a personal, working or community level. Diversity has many dimensions, including race, socioeconomic background, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc. While each of these dimensions needs to be treated separately, there are studies that show that diversity in one dimension usually helps the others¹.

This is particularly true for instance when focusing on gender and more specifically on women, it has been seen that the inclusion towards LGBTQ+ communities and inclusiveness of the events is also improved. Lack of visibility and representation of gender diversity is a significant problem specifically in photonics sciences; therefore, it should be considered throughout the whole process, from the design to the implementation of the events. In fact, there are studies that show that gender diversity is positively related to innovation². It is thus important to increase the diversity of the photonics ecosystem, and one of the ways is to attract more under-represented groups to photonics.

This Empowering Gender Diversity Guide provides explanations and tips that can facilitate to make events as inclusive as possible, be diversity friendly with the aim that they are applicable by other event types as well. Furthermore, it provides some tips and insights on attracting and retaining women talent, especially on those fields where there is a clear unbalance like photonics and other Deep Tech fields.

¹Nielsen M. W. et al., Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 114, 8, 2017, 1740-1742; V. Hunt et al., Diversity wins. McKinsey, 2020; Mousa M., Public Organization Review 21, 1, 2021, 119-135; Nielsen M. W. et al., Nature human behaviour 2, 10, 2018, 726-734.

²Kuschel K. et al., International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 2020 ;; Díaz-García C. et al., Innovation, Organization & Management, 2013.

Visibility

Visibility is the first step to inclusion.

The increased visibility can help the communities to understand the gender diversity and consequently show respect and therefore everyone can feel welcomed. That can be supported during the event organization by:

- Providing the opportunity to list and identify pronouns as much as possible through the application process and when the event is taking place.
- Making sure that more options are included for gender identity throughout the application and the implementation of the events.
- Working towards gender normalization and reducing assumptions by using gender-neutral language.
- Having posters featuring scientists (or other professionals relevant to the event) belonging to different communities. For example, mixing famous names with profiles of scientists with less public notoriety, normalizing diversity at all levels.

Format and Design



Implementing session formats to make sure that everyone is comfortable throughout the events.

A friendly environment for everyone, regardless their gender, and design events with gender-neutral language making them appealing and inclusive:

- Provide different formats that participants can find their way to interact. For example, use of diverse ways to enable questions by the participants, from raising hand and asking in front of everyone to collecting questions on cards, or online tools, making it easier for more shy people to participate. The important points are to have an actively participant community of active participants, and to include everyone and put in place the tools to allow everyone to be heard.
- Schedule that allows room for personal exchanges, encourage and drive networking. If possible, include team building activities. The use of different formats to ensure that everyone is at the same level when networking. For example, if there are participants in wheelchairs, networking sessions could be organized around tables and sitting in chairs. The general point is the use of different formats to ensure that everybody is comfortable. However, it is also important to not overrule completely the social conventions because we should not end up with something that feels unnatural.
- Duration of the events that allow participants with different family background to attend. Events that take part during the week are more common and recommended; however, they might not be suitable for participants with younger kids or little flexibility at work or school. Satellite events are appreciated, and streaming of sessions can be highly appreciated. Weekend events could be at the same time good and bad, making it possible for some people to participate that otherwise could not and the other way around.
- Always encourage the participants to fill in the feedback forms sent after the event highlighting the importance of their opinion to improve the quality and implementation of future events.

Content & People



The speakers, moderators and the participants set the atmosphere of every event.

It is important to ensure that the talks, networks, and workshops are promoting gender inclusivity and that everyone is encouraged to pursue a step ahead in their career.

- Truly diverse atmosphere through diversity in moderators and speakers (age, race, gender, culture etc.) while ensuring that participants feel comfortable.
- It is important that moderators are fully aware or better trained of inclusion concepts, and should supervise the sessions to keep a positive attitude among participants, making everyone comfortable. Use of the “positive mode keeper” role.
- Encourage panelists and speakers to highlight the importance of inclusivity by sharing inclusion values.
- Inspirational talks, individual experiences and stories that may highlight gender issues and challenges can be very impactful.
- Use of inclusive language.
- Produce content that is understandable by people with diverse backgrounds, make the event approachable by people with different level of knowledge in a specific area, providing a good overview of the corresponding landscape.
- Implement workshops within events and encourage participants to share their ideas and point of views about diversity and ways for its reinforcement. This can be either personal or anonymously.

Location & Logistics

Make sure that the event can be as much as possible accessible by everyone without discrimination policies:

Location and Venue

- Choosing venues that convey lower costs in terms of the use of facilities; therefore, the organization of the events can be affordable
- Venues that are easily reachable, especially through public transportation, and are based in safe areas, so that if the event ends late in the day, there should be no safety concern for the participants.
- While not gender-related, use facilities with no architectural barriers and accessible by persons with reduced mobility.
- When a diverse audience is targeted in terms of the education background, it is advised to choose locations that are welcoming to people of different disciplines (for instance, better avoid organizing an event at a faculty of physics, as it will automatically exclude participants of other disciplines).

Location & Logistics

Additional logistics

- Ensure that human rights are well protected across the relevant country that the event is taking place e.g., the local policies regarding communities such as LGBTBI+.
- Possibility to offer special financial aid (e.g., travel grant) to women and/or underrepresented categories.
- Make sure that there are all-gender toilets and breast-feeding spaces.
- Generate forms with no binary gender options (for example, "Male, Female, Non-binary, I don't identify as any of these options, prefer not to say").
- Safe environment with defined process to report any abuse, attacks, harassment or uncomfortable situations.
- Explicit information should be provided so that participants know how to direct their worries or reports.
- Clarifying the information privacy and confidentiality when collecting personal and sensitive data.
- The reasons why the personal information is being asked and collected should be properly explained in the application form. In addition, how the information will be treated and kept confidential should be clear e.g., planning purposes used by logistics (aspects like dietary restrictions, disabilities that need special assistance, breast-feeding, spaces for prayers, etc); allowing participants to choose their pronouns; measuring of the outcomes.

Communication

Communication and dissemination materials throughout the whole organization of events shall promote the use of an inclusive language and make everyone feel comfortable.

- It is acknowledgeable that is difficult for instance in Romanic languages to identify all nouns with a gender. Still, there are strategies that can be used to make the language inclusive. For instance, in English, the use of gender-neutral pronouns and age friendly language when communicating, like using “early stage” rather than “young”.
- There are several guidelines for a gender-balanced approach of events that have been published within EU projects such as PHABLABS 4.0 as well as by institutions like ICFO and this Empowering Diversity guide.
- Explicitly communicate the inclusivity of the events and be clear about inclusion also in materials.
- Prepare posters featuring a diverse image of the people appearing in them.
- While our focus here is gender, consider all sorts of diversities (ages, races, genders, etc).
- Consider the option to train moderators so that they are fully aware of inclusion concepts.
- Create communication and dissemination strategies targeting women.
- Confidential and safe reporting process.
- A good strategy to bring visibility to for instance women in specific fields, include historical figures of women in posters and talks. This can be extended to any under-represented community.



Code of Conduct



A code of conduct represents a summary of values, rules, standards, and principles outlining what it is expected from an organization during an event. Having one in place and making it visible that is taken seriously, reflects inclusion.

It is advised to create a code of conduct that all the participants are encouraged to read and adhere to the respective policies. These codes of conducts include issues such a clear stand of the organising institutions vis à vis any kind of harassment and discrimination, and how these situations should be excluded enabling an environment where everyone is feeling welcomed and respected. Repetition of the codes for appropriate and correct behaviours can be the way to empower inclusivity. As two examples, we are including there the code of conducts published by the European Physical Society and TU Delft, which can be found in the following links:

- [TU Delft Code of conduct](#)
- [EPS Code of conduct](#)

But one can find several examples in the internet. Making feasible to integrate such codes of conducts in the registration process and asking participants to read through the polices will aid to normalize diversity policies.

In addition, information that has been published about gender equality and implementation by the Council of Europe can be found in the link [here](#).