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Guide for the Planning of Inclusive Events

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Technical data sheet

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EEA Grants

Through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA), Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are partners in the internal market with the Member States of the European Union.

To promote a continued and balanced strengthening of economic and trade relations, the parties to the EEA Agreement have established a multi-annual Financial Mechanism, known as EEA Grants.

EEA Grants aim to reduce social and economic disparities in Europe and strengthen bilateral relations between these three countries and the beneficiary countries. For 2014-2021, a total contribution of €2.8 billion has been agreed upon for 15 beneficiary countries. Portugal will benefit from a sum of €102.7 million.

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INTRODUCTION

As well as being important moments to update knowledge, scientific events are great opportunities to build/extend a network of contacts and foster new collaborations (Pendergrass et al. 2019). They are also essential for the dissemination of research results, as well as an important component for career progression (Nature 2019).

However, the environment in which events take place does not always favor or guarantee equal opportunities for all who participate in them. And not all scientists have positive experiences when they participate in scientific meetings. Some members of scientific communities are excluded (whether intentionally or not), others feel isolated when they can't identify colleagues with similar characteristics or backgrounds, others face barriers such as the lack of childcare facilities or safe toilets that allow them to be able to participate fully in the event, and some are subject to harassment and other types of violence in these environments (Pendergrass et al. 2019). The lack of diversity in panels and conferences, still dominated by men - the so-called *manels* and *manferences (*Nature 2019) - is a visible expression of inequalities in the scientific system. According to a study in Nature (2019), the participation of more women to speak at scientific events in one specific year usually results in the presence of more women in the following years.

It is therefore important to actively promote a more inclusive culture and practice of science, capable of attracting and accommodating the participation of the diversity of individuals who make up the scientific community.   This guide brings together concrete guidelines for incorporating inclusion and equity practices into scientific events, right from the planning stage. The sections are divided as follows:
1) Event/activity planning
2) During the event/activity
3) After the event/activity

WHO IS THIS MATERIAL INTENDED FOR?

This guide aims to support the organization of events and other more inclusive scientific activities. This is a dynamic document which may be updated, especially aimed at members of organizing committees, those responsible for the logistics of the conference (choosing a venue, structuring event sessions, organizing social events) and scientific committees, as well as those in charge of strategic decisions (conference themes, selection/choice of speakers and guests for roundtables). Reading this material may also be relevant for participants in scientific events, more generally, as an information resource on the topic and support to ensure that their needs are met.

STEPS TO PROMOTE MORE INCLUSIVE SCIENTIFIC EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

This section suggests a framework for planning more inclusive scientific events and activities. The steps are organized as follows: i. Planning, ii. During the event, and iii. After the event.

i. Planning

The first step to consider to promote more inclusive scientific events and activities is their planning. The following are suggestions for elements that are part of this process.

➜ Selection of a diverse and representative **organizing/scientific committee**:
- ◆ The formation of a representative and diverse organizing/scientific committee (intersectional approach) in terms of gender, nationality, race/ethnicity, career stage, and other sociodemographic and identity characteristics is important in order to promote the choice of speakers who belong to different realities;
- ◆ It is important to value and recognize the work of those who are involved in organizing events. Organization is an essential activity for the event to be successful.

➜ Selection of **speakers and session chairs**:
- ◆ Seek to ensure gender balance among the speakers at the event, with 50% women and 50% men, or as close as possible to that ratio;
- ◆ Seek to ensure gender balance among those chairing the event's sessions, with 50% women and 50% men, or as close as possible to that ratio;
- ◆ It is important that gender balance pervades the different representations that can be achieved in terms of diversity of ethnicity, origin, age, career stage, etc., both among speakers and session chairs.

➜ About the event **communication**:
- ◆ Use inclusive images and language in promotional materials, in order to communicate that the event accommodates the participation of all individuals - regardless of their origin, physical condition or academic level - who make up its target audience;
- ◆ Consider inviting participants to indicate their pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, non-binary) at the time of registration, if that is relevant to the event you are organizing (such as the inclusion of titles on ID cards, seat reservations or email correspondence). If it's not really necessary to use titles, consider removing them from any communication.

➔ Choose a place with **accessibility** conditions that are as inclusive as possible, such as accessibility in relation to:

◆ **Access**: ramps and elevators, large rooms for wheelchair users, clear, visible and appropriate signage for elevators, rooms and toilets;

◆ **Getting around**: availability of access and parking on site for private vehicles (cars, motorcycles, bicycles, scooters), as well as the different means of public transport.

◆ **Venue conditions**: chairs available for all participants throughout the duration of the event; provide extra rooms for rest, breastfeeding, and to make phone calls or video calls;

◆ **Toilets**: ensure an option for people with mobility impairments and do not use gender signage, and if this is not possible provide at least one gender-neutral bathroom;

◆ **Children**: check the possibility of providing a care space for the children, so that mothers and fathers can take the children with them to the event;

◆ **Communication**: ensure that the venue has a sound system appropriate to the size of the room (such as efficient microphones and speakers); consider making the event available online as well (live streaming or recording the event so that people can access it later).

➔ Choose the **date/s and time/s** taking into account:

◆ Avoid overlapping religious or national holidays, especially for the target audience of the event;

◆ Whenever possible, choose times that allow people with care responsibilities to attend the event. For example, choose to start the event later and finish earlier;

◆ Since the networking and leisure/entertainment sessions tend to take place after the event, try to ensure that at least one of these sessions takes place during the event, in order to facilitate the participation of people with care responsibilities;

◆ Disclose the date and time of the event in advance so that those interested can plan their attendance. Pay attention to the complexity of the event.

➔ Regarding the **meal** options served at the event:

◆ Before the event, collect information about dietary restrictions and preferences (such as vegetarianism, veganism, food allergies and intolerances). A good time to collect this information is during the participants' registration;

◆ Additional support during breaks may be required for people with reduced mobility, such as carrying food and beverage containers;

◆ If the event does not include the provision of meals, it is recommended to create a list of restaurants near the venue that offer vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free or lactose-free options, among others;

◆ If the event provides meals, it is important to ensure labels with the description of the ingredients of the dishes served, with special attention to allergens.

ii. During the event

After planning the event, it is important to pay attention to its development. This includes elements associated with the organization of Q&A sessions, panel discussions and plenary sessions, and networking sessions. Below we suggest ways to approach this part of the organization of scientific conferences.

➔ **Roundtables**

At the roundtables, it is important to ensure equal opportunities to all the participants. The following are suggestions for the panel discussions (Chautard and Hann 2019):

◆ The person responsible for chairing the roundtable should be selected carefully and oriented towards providing equal opportunities for speaking time to its members. The chair should be able to interrupt panelists who monopolize the discussion or who exceed the time allotted for their speech, as well as creating a space for speakers who speak less to share their research, visions and opinions. It should also have a good grasp of the experience, area, research and expertise of the members and ask them relevant and appropriate questions.

◆ If there is only one woman on the panel, try not to let her speak last. This guidance should also be followed for speakers who are non-white, disabled, or at an early stage of their career.

◆ If speakers are not presenting in their native language, it is important to repeat audience questions that use complex language. Consider having the option of having the questions translated into their native language, as well as being able to answer in their native language.

➔ Q&A sessions

Studies demonstrate that even when meetings have approximately equal numbers of women and men, women participate less and tend to ask fewer and shorter questions (Chautard and Hann 2019, Nature 2021). However, a more proactive intervention can significantly improve the scenario: including more women as session chairs and asking them to invite women to ask the first questions - whenever possible - can allow the percentage of questions from women to increase significantly (Nature 2021).

Here are some ways to promote greater inclusion in Q&A sessions (Chautard and Hann 2019):

◆ Collect only a few questions at a time, ensuring that there are questions from different people (different genders, career stages, ages, races/ethnicities);

◆ If the choice is to ask one question at a time, try to start with a question asked by a woman, preferably in the early stage of her career;

◆ Before the event, encourage some female colleagues to ask questions while in the audience, if no other women raise their hands;

◆ Make it clear that no question is simplistic or limited, that all opinions are welcome;

◆ If possible, also give the option for questions to be asked (anonymously or not) via an application such as Slido or via Twitter;

◆ Consider making transcripts of papers available to allow greater participation by people who have difficulty following oral presentations.

➔ **Networking sessions**

Networking sessions play an important role in providing visibility, building partnerships and supporting career development. However, not all people feel comfortable participating in these moments, so it is pertinent to rethink their structuring and leave it up to them to decide to participate. Below are some proposals (Chautard and Hann 2019):

◆ Experiment with different networking formats. For example, as part of a poster session, having an informal 'ask the experts' format;

◆ You can ask yourself at the time of registration or check-in if the person wants to participate in the networking or if they prefer to stay in a quiet space;

◆ Consider inviting academics at more advanced career stages to act as informal mentors to colleagues at an early career stage;

◆ Try the 'Randomised Coffee Trials' format, in which, when registering for the event or at check-in, participants have the option to choose to participate. Then divide them randomly into groups of three. During the coffee break people gather in these preassigned groups to chat and interact, which eliminates the concern of approaching someone you don't know and/or senior, and with the possibility of generating some interesting discussions;

◆ Consider alternatives to traditional networking sessions, in which the interaction between participants is "free", without facilitation and theme orientation. You can assign a specific theme to a global session or promote the creation of small networking groups, which can facilitate interaction between participants.

iii. After the event

Once the event has taken place, it's time to evaluate it, particularly in relation to issues of equity and inclusion. The aim is to look at what went well and what could be improved, so that future editions can ensure greater diversity in terms of participation. Below are guidelines on the evaluation process.

➔ **Before the event**

◆ It is recommended to set equity and inclusion objectives, such as:
  ● The representation of different identities, career stages, or institutional affiliations in the different sessions;
  ● Quantity and quality of interactions in the sessions.

➔ **During the event**

◆ If the event is photographed and/or filmed, it is recommended to guide the responsible person(s) to capture the diversity of the participants;

◆ Consider collecting data on participation, such as the profile of those who asked questions and how often people intervened.

➔ **After the event**

- Collect feedback from participants evaluating the event in terms of inclusion and equity, from the point of view of (ii) general perception (i) personal experience. Ask to describe the situation(s) (open questions);
- Analyze the answers and publish the results. This will also be useful in planning future events.

iv. <u>Before, during and after the event</u>

It is important to make clear the measures to prevent and mediate cases of discrimination and harassment within the scope of the event. Participants should be aware of what does and does not constitute appropriate behavior, and how they can report incidents (anonymously) if they arise. These rules must be published on the event's website and in the event's communication emails, and made available for all.

This guide was prepared with reference to guides prepared by other institutions to promote more inclusive and diverse scientific events, namely the materials prepared by Alice Chautard and Claire Hann (2019) for the REACH Conference, Angie Pendergrass et al. (2019), and by the Royal Society of Chemistry of the United Kingdom. This guide adapted the guidelines set out in other documents to its objective, to encourage the organization of more inclusive and diverse scientific events, namely in relation to the gender of those who participate in them.

The glossary available on the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) website can be useful for the definitions of concepts related to gender equality. The glossary can be accessed here.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Checklist for the planning of inclusive events iiiUC

In order to help monitor the planning of scientific events, a checklist has been drawn up, which follows below. The checklist can also be accessed at **https://www.uc.pt/iii/gender/recursos/**. This tool can be printed and used in the Planning of scientific events by the UC community.

Checklist for Planning Inclusive Events

Planning

Mark the items accordingly with an X

Organizing committee → Diverse and representative regarding:
- Gender ☐
- Nationality ☐
- Race/ethnicity ☐
- Career stage ☐

Valuing and recognizing the work of those involved in organizing events

Speakers and session chairs → Guarantee:
- Gender balance among the event's speakers ☐
- Gender balance among those chairing the event's sessions ☐
- Diversity of ethnicity, origin, age, career stage, etc. among both speakers and session chairs ☐

Communication
- Inclusive image and language → Perceptible to all backgrounds, physical conditions or academic levels ☐
- Invitation e-mails → Invite participants to indicate their pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, non-binary) and titles when registering, if relevant to the event. ☐

Venue/Accessibility
- Access: ramps and elevators, large rooms for wheelchair users, clear, visible and appropriate signage for elevators, rooms and toilets; ☐
- Getting around: availability of access and parking on site for private vehicles (cars, motorcycles, bicycles, scooters), as well as the different means of public transport. ☐
- Venue conditions: chairs available for all participants throughout the duration of the event; provide extra rooms for rest, breastfeeding, and to make phone calls or video calls; ☐
- Toilets: ensure an option for people with mobility impairments and do not use gender signage, and if this is not possible provide at least one gender-neutral bathroom; ☐
- Children: check the possibility of providing a care space for the children, so that mothers and fathers can take the children with them to the event; ☐
- Communication: ensure that the venue has a sound system appropriate to the size of the room (such as efficient microphones and speakers); consider making the event available online as well (live streaming or recording the event so that people can access it later). ☐

Scheduling
- Avoid religious or national holidays ☐
- Choose hours that allow people with caring responsibilities to attend the event ☐
- Promote networking and leisure/entertainment sessions during the event (at least one) ☐
- Publicize the date and time of the event in advance (taking into account the complexity of the event) ☐

Checklist for Planning Inclusive Events

Planning

Mark the items accordingly with an X

Meals

- Ensure additional support during breaks for people with reduced mobility, such as carrying food and beverage containers ☐
- During registration, collect information about dietary restrictions and preferences (such as vegetarianism, veganism, food allergies and intolerances). ☐
- If the event does not provide meals, create a list of restaurants near the venue that offer vegetarian, vegan or other options. ☐
- If the event provides meals, ensure labels describing the ingredients of the dishes served, with special attention to allergens ☐

During the event

Mark the items accordingly with an X

Roundtables

- Whoever chairs the round table should provide equal opportunities for speaking time, interrupt those who monopolize, get to know the speakers well ☐
- If there is only one woman or person from other minority groups on the panel, try not to let them speak last ☐
- Consider translating the questions into the speakers' native language and allowing them to answer in their native language. ☐

Q&A sessions

- Collect only a few questions at a time, ensuring that there are questions from different people (different genders, career stages, ages, races/ethnicities); ☐
- Try to start with a question asked by a woman, preferably in the early stage of her career ☐
- Make it clear that no question is simplistic or limited, that all opinions are welcome; ☐
- If possible, also give the option for questions to be asked (anonymously or not) via an application such as Slido or via Twitter; ☐
- Consider making transcripts of papers available to allow greater participation by people who have difficulty following oral presentations. ☐

Networking sessions

- Consider inviting academics at more advanced career stages to act as informal mentors to colleagues at an early career stage; ☐
- Try different networking formats (such as Randomized Coffee Trials) ☐

Checklist for Planning Inclusive Events

iii. After the event

Time to evaluate the event in relation to issues of equity and inclusion

Before

Define equity and inclusion objectives (e.g. different identities, career stages, or institutional affiliations in the different sessions) ☐

The event's guidelines on gender issues should be shared with participants beforehand ☐

During

Instruct the person(s) responsible for taking photographs and video of the event to capture the diversity of the participants ☐

Consider collecting data on participation, such as the profile of who asked questions and the number of times people spoke. ☐

After

Gather feedback from participants evaluating the event on a number of issues concerning inclusion and equity ☐

Analyze the answers and publish the results ☐