

PR1: CA16204

First Progress Report from Action

Submitted on: 16-11-2018

This report was submitted by the Action Chair, on behalf of the Management Committee of the Action, in fulfilment of the requirements of the rules for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment. The first Progress Review (PR1) enables the monitoring of the Action's implementation of the SC Recommendations from the proposal stage and the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy.

Throughout this document Early Career Investigators and Inclusiveness Target Countries, as defined in the "Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities" (COST 132/14 REV), are referred to using the acronyms "ECIs" and "ITCs".

Proposal							
	Participating countries	Main Proposer			% in Network of Proposers		
	% ITC	ITC	ECI	Female	ITC	ECI	Female
Proposal OC-2016-2-21278	9	NO	NO	NO	9	20	30
SC Recommendation							
The proposal would benefit from increased involvement of ITCs and must develop and implement specific plans in this regard. The project also need to review the activity of ECIs and females to ensure that the planned activities to increase ECIs and females are functioning.							

Action: Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs)				
	Participating countries % ITC	MC Members % ITC	Leadership roles % ITC	Relative representation of ITCs in leadership roles
Action CA16204	52	52	29	56
All Actions	49	47	24	51
We believe the data shows that our efforts to ensure a broader representation of ITC in our Action have been quite successful. From 10% at the proposal stage, we went to 52% today. We were able to attract many ITC participating countries and they are well-represented among the MC as well. Looking beyond the official leadership roles defined here, we have further important roles in the Action, several of which are also held by participants from an ITC: one WG co-lead, our Quality Assurance officer as well as our Training School coordinator are from an ITC. Also, our selection criteria for STSMs and Training School grants explicitly give preference to applicants from ITC.				

Action: Early Career Investigators (ECIs)

	MC Members % ECI	Leadership roles % ECI	Relative representation of ECI in leadership roles
Action CA16204	27	57	211
All Actions	27	20	74

The data regarding ECIs appears to show that while ECI are not exceptionally-well represented on the level of MC membership, they do taken an outstanding level of responsibility in leadership roles in our Action. We encouraged ECIs to do this, among other things, by having co-leads in each Working Group so that ECIs can rely on the support from others if and when they need it. (Note that looking beyond MC membership and leadership roles, our selection criteria for STSMs and Training School grants explicitly give preference to applicants who are ECIs.)

Action: Gender Balance			
	MC Members % Female	Leadership roles % Female	Relative representation of females in leadership roles
Action CA16204	46	43	93
All Actions	39	41	105

The data appears to show that the gender balance in our Action is quite well overall, although the numbers are slightly less balanced for the leadership roles. This is therefore an area on which we would like to focus specifically in the next grant periods. Looking beyond MC membership and leadership roles, for example at gender balance at Action events, shows for example that among the participants of our upcoming Galway Training School, 20 are female and 16 are male, according to data from November 15.

Action comment on its implementation (achievement and/or effort) of SC Recommendation(s) to date

Overall, we believe we have taken the SC recommendations seriously and were able to improve representation of ECIs and ITCs as well as gender balance significantly in comparison to the proposal phase. The one area where we have found it more challenging to advance very clearly is gender balance in leadership roles. We believe this is partially due to the difficulty we experienced to offer child-care options during MC meetings because COST doesn't have any budget-line for this kind of expense. Offering this would be a signal to all participants that an MC member role, a leadership role or a trainer position is compatible with having a family.

Action description of plans to implement SC Recommendations and COST policy in the future

We do not have specific plans, at this point, to increase the number of ITC participating in the Action, as we have now 29 participating countries and do not expect to grow much more from now on. However, if leadership roles should become available, we will actively encourage participants from ITC to stand for election. We believe we have made good progress with regards to ECIs and do not have new or specific plans regarding their role. However, we do think we should do more to better fulfil our gender balance ambitions. We have created an "Inclusiveness Task Force" (regarding diversity and inclusiveness not just in terms of gender) that has recently completed a survey among Action participants on what measures participants believe are most helpful in this regard and we will attempt to implement the resulting recommendations. While on most topics, we have received mixed feedback in the survey, there clearly is enthusiasm for supporting ITC/ECI/female researchers in the form of coaching or courses, e.g. on career planning, public speaking or funding opportunities. Also, we believe that the survey itself was a useful tool to raise awareness

of issues of diversity on many different levels in our Action.
