

Workshop “Gender dimension in science”

Strasbourg, France, **Monday 14th September 2026**

Venue: Amphitheater Collège Doctoral Européen, 46 Bd de la Victoire, 67000, Strasbourg

13:45-18:15

Time	Talk	Speaker	Talk title
13:45 - 14:00	Registration		
14:00 - 14:10		Dr. Cécilia Ménard-Moyon	Welcome and introduction
Session 1 – Chairwoman: Dr. Valérie Caps			
14:10 - 14:40	1	Dr. Elizabeth Pollitzer	A holistic perspective on the gender dimension in research
14:40 - 15:10	2	Prof. Susanna Hofmann	Cardiometabolic diseases and biological sex: time for greater precision
15:10 - 15:40	3	Jacopo Sorani	Addressing women's safety and sex-based differences in safe and sustainable by design
15:40 - 16:10	Coffee break		
Session 2 – Chairwoman: Dr. Serena Bernacchi			
16:10 - 16:40	4	Dr. Manuel Berdoy	Two is better than one: the Sex Inclusive Research Framework in animal research
16:40 - 17:40	Panel discussion with the speakers Facilitated by Dr. Serena Bernacchi (CNRS, Strasbourg) and Dr. Valérie Caps (CNRS, Strasbourg) - Equality representatives (COREGAL) for the CNRS Alsace delegation & Johanne Desbief (CNRS, European Project Manager)		
17:40 - 18:10	5	Prof. Petra Debusscher	Fostering gender equality and diversity in the workplace - Gendering research and innovation (<i>online talk</i>)
18:10 - 18:15		Dr. Cécilia Ménard-Moyon	Concluding remarks

Talk 1 – Dr. Elizabeth POLLITZER

A holistic perspective on the gender dimension in research

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The importance of integrating sex/gender as research variables in study design to prevent bias and eliminate gaps in evidence, as well as ensure replicability, is particularly well documented in relation to excellence in health research. More recently, the view of the relevance of the ‘gender dimension’ for research quality was expanded to highlight the significance of intersectional aspects of sex and gender such as age, ethnicity, social status etc. This understanding of the gender dimension goes beyond considering gender balance in who is represented and who benefits from research to also respect the wider context of science knowledge-making, including impact. For instance, worries have been raised that AI can perpetuate historical gender bias in evidence, and that research in the Global South is infiltrated with postcolonial influences that promote ‘western’ knowledge and science practice, neglect the special needs of the local populations, and ignore the value of indigenous knowledge.

A holistic perspective on the gender dimension in research and innovation also examines the conditions under which science systems work. From this angle, considerations of the gender dimension should be also integrated into researcher training, valorization of results for societal benefit, advancing evidence-led innovations for women’s health, and making research conducted in collaborations with researchers in the Global South more equitable and sensitive to diverse worldviews, knowledge systems, and values.

Biography



Elizabeth Pollitzer academic training includes BSc in Biophysics and PhD in Information Science from University of London. She took MSc course on Advanced Information Systems/AI at Imperial, London, and worked there at the Department of Computing on HCI systems for 20 years. She coordinated the Joint Council Initiative in Cognitive Science and HCI, which advanced interdisciplinary research to underpin HCI design with understanding of cognitive behaviour. In 2001 she co-funded Portia a not for profit organisation dedicated to promoting understanding of sex/gender issues in science knowledge making as a condition of research quality. In 2011 she created the global Gender Summit platform for dialogue involving scientists, gender scholars and policy makers in examination of evidence of gender bias in science knowledge. She was involved in many EU projects linked to this mission.

Talk 2 – Prof. Susanna Hofmann

Cardiometabolic diseases and biological sex: time for greater precision

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Cardiometabolic diseases are frequently approached as though women and men share identical biological pathways, risk profiles, and treatment responses. However, biological sex influences fat distribution, adipose tissue function, lipid storage, lipid metabolism, and inflammatory signaling. These differences may shape disease trajectory, including age at onset, progression, comorbidity patterns, therapeutic response, and long-term outcomes. Yet current diagnostic and prognostic tools often lack the precision needed to capture individual cardiometabolic risk. Body mass index (BMI), for example, does not distinguish between fat and lean mass or account for the regional distribution of adipose tissue. When used in isolation, it may therefore underestimate or misclassify risk. This limitation is particularly consequential because cardiometabolic disease is a major driver of cardiovascular disease, whose prevalence, clinical presentation, and underlying pathophysiology differ between women and men, including in coronary artery disease, heart failure phenotypes, microvascular dysfunction, vascular remodeling.

This talk will examine why sex-informed precision is urgently needed in cardiometabolic medicine. It will discuss recent recommendations from expert committees emphasizing more nuanced definitions of adiposity and improved approaches to risk assessment, prevention, and treatment. The presentation will also consider emerging prognostic biomarkers and imaging-derived measures, including intermuscular adipose tissue (IMAT), which may provide clinically meaningful information beyond conventional diagnostics. Integrating biological sex with body composition, disease phenotype, and molecular biomarkers could improve early diagnosis, risk prediction, and personalized care. Moving beyond BMI and one-size-fits-all models is essential for more equitable prevention and treatment across the life course.

Biography



Univ.-Prof. Dr. med. Susanna Hofmann is a Physician Scientist, W2 Professor of Lipid Metabolism and Metabolic Diseases at the Medical Faculty of the Ludwig Maximilians University Munich (LMU) and Head of the Independent Research Group "Women and Diabetes" at Helmholtz Zentrum München, German Research Center for Environmental Health (HMGU). After her studies at the University of Padua and the Free University of Berlin, she completed her doctoral thesis with Summa cum Laude and worked as a resident at the Medical

Talk 3 – Jacopo Sorani

Addressing Women's Safety and Sex-Based differences in safe and sustainable by design

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This talk explores how sex-related differences remain insufficiently addressed in safety, sustainability and product design. Although Safe and Sustainable by Design aims to anticipate risks early in the innovation process, many products, materials, protective systems and workplace safety standards are still based on a supposedly neutral “average user” or “average worker”. In practice, this average often reflects male bodies, male exposure patterns and male-dominated datasets. This talk will show how risks can become invisible when biological sex, gender roles, occupational segregation, caregiving responsibilities, product-use habits and cumulative exposures are not considered. Examples may include personal care products, protective equipment, chemical exposure in feminised workplaces, automotive safety, cleaning products and ergonomic design. The talk argues that sex-sensitive design is not about creating “products for women”, but about designing safer and more inclusive systems for real bodies, real users and real working conditions. Participants will be invited to rethink Safe and Sustainable by Design through a gender lens, identifying where data are missing, whose exposure is underestimated, and how design choices can either reproduce or reduce inequality.

Biography



Jacopo Sorani is a PhD student of Melomanes project. He works in bringing sustainability assessment into pharmaceutical and chemical product development, early enough to actually change design decisions. He has 4 years of experience applying Life Cycle Assessment, Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSbD) and environmental risk assessment to pharmaceutical products, nanomaterials and medical devices. As a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at ETH Zürich/Empa, he led two applied projects with a pharmaceutical company: an LCA of pharmaceutical manufacturing and one of the first implementations of the EU SSbD framework on a drug product in early development (published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, 2026). He combines LCA methodology (SimaPro, OpenLCA, ecoinvent, ISO 14040/44) with programming. I built EnerChem Flow, a Python tool for energy-flow calculations in life cycle inventory modeling, and I work on prospective LCA and scale-up methodologies for early-phase assessments. Currently a Visiting Scientist at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (EU Policy Lab, Brussels), working on strategic foresight and sustainability assessment. Working inside the Commission has strengthened my interest in EU policy: I want to contribute to science-based policymaking on chemicals, sustainable products, supply chains and agriculture.

Talk 4 – Dr. Manuel Berdoy

Two is better than one: the Sex Inclusive Research Framework in animal research

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Preclinical animal research has a persistent sex bias, with studies still frequently conducted in only one sex, typically males. This creates a systematically biased knowledge base and limits the generalisability and translation of research findings. Although researchers widely recognise that sex matters, the transition to sex-inclusive research is hindered by perceived practical and scientific obstacles.

Common concerns include assumptions that females are intrinsically more variable, that including both sexes will require twice as many animals and increase costs, that sex-related variation will reduce statistical power, and that welfare or logistical challenges make inclusion impractical. Established research practices can themselves also become a reason for resisting change. Evidence suggests that many of these concerns are misconceptions rather than unavoidable barriers.

The Sex Inclusive Research Framework (SIRF) was developed as a collaborative initiative (see contributors in [1] below) to help researchers, funders and animal research governance committees distinguish genuine constraints from such misconceptions. Through a 12-question decision framework, the SIRF evaluates whether research proposals appropriately include females and males, whether sex is adequately considered in experimental design and analysis, and whether proposed single-sex studies have a scientifically defensible justification.



I will discuss some of the perceived obstacles to sex-inclusive animal research, how the SIRF addresses them, and how the SIRF-UP initiative [2] is now exploring the practical implementation of the framework within animal research governance and ethical review processes. Ultimately, making sex inclusion routine requires not simply new policies, but changes in scientific practice and culture.

References:

- [1] Natasha A. Karp, Manuel Berdoy, Kelly Gray, Lilian Hunt, Maggy Jennings, Angela Kerton, Matt Leach, Jordi L. Tremoleda, Jon Gledhill, Esther J. Pearl, Nathalie Percie du Sert, Benjamin Phillips, Penny S. Reynolds, Kathy Ryder, S. Clare Stanford, Sara Wells & Lucy Whitfield, The Sex Inclusive Research Framework to address sex bias in preclinical research proposals [Nature Communications](#) **2025**, Vol 16, 3763.
- [2] SIRF-UP: <https://sabv.eu/projects> (EU-SABV COST network)

Biography



Manuel Berdoy is a zoologist, born in France, who has had the privilege to work with animals such as primates in Africa, reptiles in America and Penguins in Antarctica. He then moved up the alphabet by moving to Britain, at the University of Oxford, where he worked with small mammals, the hardest of them all.

His interests, usually within an evolutionary framework have ranged from animal social behaviour to parasite manipulation but, in the last 25 years, he has published in the areas of welfare (of animals), design (of experiments), reproducibility (of results) and education in relevant fields of laboratory animal and biomedical sciences.

He is a co-author, of *The Design of Animal Experiments*, whose first edition in 2002 was arguably a forerunner to the reproducibility crisis movement and he was a member of the European expert working group that recently developed recommendations for teaching experimental design in preclinical science. In addition to Oxford, he has lectured on issues of experimental design worldwide and is currently involved in the SIFR-UP initiative, which seeks to address sex bias in preclinical research through better experimental design and research practice.

Talk 5 – Prof. Petra DESBUSSCHER

Fostering gender equality and diversity in the workplace - Gendering research and innovation

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Abstract Gender equality and diversity in research concern not only who becomes a scientist, but also how science is conducted, which questions are asked and whose bodies and experiences are represented. This talk begins with a brief overview of the EU's approach to gender equality in research and innovation, including Gender Equality Plans and the integration of the gender dimension into Horizon Europe research.

It then considers what gender and intersectionality mean for researchers' own choices: from the models, data and categories used in biomedical and nanomedicine research to the assumptions made about patients and the societal consequences of innovation. It also reflects on how precarity, care and uncertainty shape scientific careers and research agendas.

Drawing on my experience as an academic researcher and EU policy expert, and on how motherhood, care, precarity and illness have changed me as a researcher, I will reflect on the distance between “the patient” as a research category and the patient as a whole person. The central argument is that empathy, care and reflexivity are not opposed to scientific excellence. They help researchers identify blind spots, ask better questions and develop science that is both more rigorous and more responsive to the people it ultimately aims to serve.

Biography



Petra Debusscher is a Belgian political scientist and senior researcher focusing on gender equality and intersectionality in EU policies and politics. She is affiliated with Ghent University as a guest professor at the Ghent Institute for International and European Studies.

Alongside her academic work, Petra has two decades of experience as an independent expert on gender equality and intersectionality for EU institutions. She has worked with the European Commission, including DG INTPA, DG JUST and the European Research Executive Agency, the European Parliament, the European Institute for Gender Equality and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, among others. Her work bridges critical academic research with the practical design, evaluation and implementation of European gender equality policies.