CEPLAS
Cluster of Excellence on Plant Sciences

Guidelines for planning inclusive meetings and events @ CEPLAS

These guidelines outline core principles to help ensure all CEPLAS events – whether small internal seminars or larger public events – are planned and run in an inclusive and welcoming way.

Many aspects of diversity can affect whether, and how, people are able to participate fully in an event. (e.g., culture, race, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, age, language, family responsibilities, career stage, (dis)abilities, religion, educational background). While it may not always be possible to remove all such barriers, recognising them and planning proactively can significantly improve equitable access and participation.

This document focuses on three key priorities: **family-friendliness, gender sensitivity/inclusive representation, and accessibility.** The guidelines will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect evolving best practices. For questions, support, or advice on planning inclusive events – especially large-scale ones— please contact the **CEPLAS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office.** We are more than happy to assist you.

For questions or suggestions please don't hesitate to contact us: equality@ceplas.de or visit www.ceplas.eu/en/about-us/equality/

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Family-Friendliness

- **Scheduling:** Compulsory events, committee/research area meetings, and other important dates should be held during the normal opening hours of family-support facilities (approx. 08:00 – 16:00). **No important meeting should start after 16:00.**
- **Recurring meetings (e.g. CEPLAS-Fridays)**: Periodically check whether regular meeting times remain suitable for participants with family responsibilities
- **Schoolholidays:** Avoid key events during NRW school holidays where possible. (overview down below).

  → **If this is not feasible, please contact the CEPLAS Equity Diversity and Inclusion Office to arrange on-site or short-term childcare.**
- **Advance notice:** Send invitations as early as possible so participants have time to arrange childcare or adjust schedules.
- **Prioritising parents/carers:** When selecting time slots for internal activities (e.g., selection workshops, interviews), offer priority to those with family responsibilities, and clearly mention flexibility in your invitations.
- **Facilities:** For external events, ensure the venue has baby care and lactation/ nursing rooms, or arrange suitable alternatives
- **Remote participation:** Where possible, offer livestream or hybrid options so attendance is not limited to those able to travel.

Academic year 2025 – 2026

Semester lecture period

- **13.10.2025 – 06.02.2026**
- **13.04.2025 – 24.07.2026**

Regular day-care openings hours

8 – 15.30h

Regular school schedule

8 – 16.30h

School Holidays NRW

- **13.10.2025 – 25.10.2025**
- **22.12.2025 – 06.01.2026**
- **30.03.2026 – 11.04.2026**
- **26.05.2026**
- **20.07.2026 – 01.09.2026**

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Gender Sensitivity & Inclusive Representation

- **Commit to balanced representation:** Panels and keynote speakers should reflect gender diversity and include women* and members of other historically underrepresented groups in science (e.g., people of colour and racialised scholars, researchers with a migration background, and people with (dis) abilities).
- **Be proactive:** Dedicate sufficient time and resources to identifying qualified experts from underrepresented groups. Use varied sourcing strategies, such as recommendations from peers or past speakers, and reach out directly to promising researchers, even if they are not yet widely known, to encourage their participation.
- **Acknowledge demand pressures:** Women* and other underrepresented scientists often receive a disproportionately high number of invitations to participate in committees and events. This may require making multiple requests and allowing flexibility in scheduling to secure participation. To support fair participation, please build in the additional time needed and plan accordingly.
- **Expand reach:** Use channels and networks that effectively engage underrepresented groups (e.g., professional associations, women's NGOs, targeted media), and consult specialised databases such as:
  - **Humboldt Foundation Network**
  - **Femconsult**
  - **500 Women Scientists**
  - **SpeakerinnenListe**
- **Event Visibility:** Ensure that all promotional materials, flyers, and event media (including photos used in articles or online) authentically reflect balanced gender representation and diversity among speakers and participants.
- **Equitable discussion:** During Q&A sessions, encourage moderators to invite contributions from women* and other underrepresented participants early on. Research shows that male-dominated interventions at the start of discussions can discourage diverse participation.
- **Acknowledge and respect gender identity:** Include an optional field for pronouns during registration and use chosen names and pronouns on name tags, with participants' consent.

Women* — inclusive umbrella term for women, trans, queer, and non-binary

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Accessibility

- **Proactive communication:** In all invitations and announcements, include a short, clear accessibility statement (e.g. "We strive to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for all our events. Please let us know if you have any accessibility requirements.") and provide a direct way for participants to respond.

- **Early identification of needs:**

  - For events with registration, include an "Accessibility needs" field in the form.
  - For open-access events without registration, plan essential accessibility measures in advance (e.g., step-free access, accessible seating, clear signage).

- **Venue and infrastructure:** Choose venues that mind regulations for accessibility (Barrierefreiheit), including wheelchair access, accessible toilets, clear signage, good lighting, and seating flexibility.

- **Assistive services:** Where needed, arrange sign language interpretation, assistive listening devices (ALD), live captions, or other services. Confirm arrangements directly with participants before the event.

- **Information materials:** Share programmes, slides, and handouts in accessible formats (like large print, high-contrast versions, or digital copies sent out in advance), following the German Accessibility Act (BFSG) and the EU Accessibility Act (EAA).

- **Breaks and comfort:** For longer events, schedule regular breaks and ensure there are quiet spaces available for rest or sensory regulation.

Further example: Guide for organizing Inclusive scientific meetings (500womenscientists.org)