



# Report on Intersectionality Webinar

## COST CCA Working Group 4

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## COST CCA Working Group 4: Gender Equity and Fostering Diversity

Webinar: Intersectionality and Young Researcher Career Development  
26 June 2025 | 14:15–15:45 CEST | Online (Zoom)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ForugPZasu4>

### 1. Overview and Objectives

The webinar “*Intersectionality and Young Researcher Career Development*” was successfully held on 26 June 2025 as part of the COST Cross-Cutting Activity (CCA) on Career Development for Young Researchers. The event brought together over 40 participants from diverse disciplinary, institutional, and geographical backgrounds, reflecting strong interest in the topic and its relevance across the European research community.

The primary objective of the webinar was to explore how intersectionality, the interaction of multiple social identities such as gender, race, socio-economic background, disability, and other axes of difference, shapes the career trajectories of early career and young researchers. The session aimed to move beyond abstract discussions by combining conceptual grounding, real-world case studies, and policy-oriented dialogue, ultimately contributing to more equitable and inclusive research environments.

### 2. Organisation and Structure

The webinar was moderated by Dr Adna Ašić and Dr Verity Elston, with contributions from distinguished speakers Dr Anne-Sophie Godfroy and Dr Victoria Showunmi, and a guest contribution from Ms Judith Litjens, Policy Advisor at the COST Association.

The 90-minute session was structured into four main parts:

1. Introduction to the COST CCA and Working Group 4
2. Conceptual foundations of intersectionality
3. Case histories illustrating lived experiences
4. Challenges, policy implications, and wrap-up.

This structure allowed for a balanced progression from policy framing and theory to applied examples and interactive discussion.

### 3. Opening Session: COST Context and WG4 Introduction

The webinar opened with a welcome and policy framing delivered by Ms Judith Litjens, who introduced COST Association strategic commitment to supporting young researchers and highlighted the importance of cross-cutting activities in addressing systemic challenges across research systems. Her contribution set the policy context and underlined the relevance of intersectionality for research careers within European cooperation frameworks.

This was followed by a presentation by Adna Ašić, introducing Working Group 4 (WG4): Gender Equity and Fostering Diversity in Research. The presentation outlined the focus of WG4 on equity and diversity as an integrated approach that goes beyond gender equality alone, addressing multiple forms of difference-based discrimination. Key elements included:

- familiarisation with EU guidelines and tools related to gender equity and diversity,
- critical assessment of their implementation and existing gaps,
- analysis of barriers faced by early career researchers, based on projects, practice, and original qualitative data, and
- the development of policy recommendations for European projects, institutions, and research networks.

### 4. Part 1: Introduction to Intersectionality

The first substantive session was led by Dr Anne-Sophie Godfroy, who provided a comprehensive overview of intersectionality as a concept, tracing its origins and explaining its relevance to academic career development. She explored how intersecting identities, such as gender, race, socio-economic status, and disability, shape access to opportunities, recognition, and progression in research careers.

Drawing on her expertise in philosophy, sociology of science, and gender studies, Dr Godfroy illustrated how institutional norms and evaluation practices often appear neutral while producing unequal outcomes. Concrete examples of systemic barriers and implicit biases were discussed, helping participants relate theory to everyday academic experiences. The session included interactive elements, allowing participants to reflect on and share personal observations related to intersectionality in their own career paths.

### 5. Part 2: Case Histories and Lived Experiences

The second session featured Dr Victoria Showunmi, who presented a series of real-world case studies illustrating how intersectionality operates in practice within research and higher education contexts. Her contribution focused on the lived experiences of young researchers, particularly women and researchers from racially and culturally marginalised backgrounds.

Dr Showunmi introduced conceptual frameworks that explain how “sophisticated” and subtle institutional behaviours can hinder equity while remaining largely invisible. Through examples from her recent research projects, including work on leadership in higher education and the experiences of Black women and PhD students, she highlighted both success stories and

persistent challenges. This session encouraged participants to critically reflect on how institutional cultures and informal practices shape career development, visibility, and leadership opportunities.

## 6. Part 3: Challenges and Policy Implications

The third part of the webinar, moderated by Verity Elston, focused on structural challenges and policy implications. In dialogue with Dr Godfroy and Dr Showunmi, the discussion addressed:

- enduring structural barriers within research institutions,
- the gap between formal equality policies and lived realities,
- practical strategies for institutions to address disparities in hiring, mentoring, funding, and career progression, and
- the role of leadership and accountability in driving meaningful change.

This segment was highly interactive, with participants actively engaging through questions and comments. The discussion emphasised the importance of translating intersectional awareness into actionable institutional practices and policy measures, rather than treating diversity as a purely rhetorical commitment.

## 7. Wrap-up and Participant Engagement

The final session focused on synthesis and engagement, using interactive tools (Mentimeter and Wooclap) to capture participant reflections. Participants were invited to share:

- key insights gained from the webinar,
- commitments to action within their own institutions or projects, and
- recommended resources for further learning.

This interactive wrap-up reinforced learning outcomes and encouraged participants to consider how the discussed concepts could inform their professional practice.

## 8. Outcomes and Impact

The webinar achieved its objectives by:

- increasing awareness of intersectionality and its relevance to young researcher career development,
- providing concrete examples that linked theory to practice,
- fostering dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and institutional actors, and
- contributing evidence-based insights to the work of WG4 and the wider COST community.

With over 40 participants and active engagement throughout, the event demonstrated strong interest and relevance. The discussions and insights generated will inform ongoing WG4

activities, including the drafting of policy recommendations and the promotion of short- and long-term practices that support equity and diversity in European research environments.

## 9. Conclusion

The successful delivery of this webinar represents an important contribution to the COST Cross-Cutting Activity on Career Development for Young Researchers. By foregrounding intersectionality and centring lived experiences alongside policy and institutional analysis, the event strengthened understanding of the complex factors shaping early research careers and reinforced the need for systemic, inclusive approaches within European research ecosystems.

