

# France: Charter for Gender Fairness at Conferences

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**Abstract.** The *Women and Physics Committee* of SFP (the French Physical Society), supported by CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research, a large research entity in France), F&S (Women and Science association) and SFO (the French Optical society), proposes to ask for the signature of a “gender fairness” charter to any conference organizer applying for any help of SFP, SFO, CNRS or F&S (a label, a funding or a communication action). We recommend that the Women Physicists’ committees in all national Physics Societies have similar initiatives so that all physics conferences soon become “gender fair”.



## INTRODUCTION

Before the European Parliament resolution of 9 September 2015 on women’s careers in science and universities, and glass ceilings encountered, France had adopted in July 2013 a law on higher education and research, the so-called

Fioraso's Law, which included gender parity in the governing instances of the universities. Earlier, in January 2013, a charter has been signed between the government, represented by the two ministers Genevieve Fioraso and Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and organizations representing more than 300 higher education institutions in France, to promote equality between men and women in higher education and research. The effects of these governance decisions are now visible in the compositions of the different university councils and of the recruitment committees.

The effects at the level of recruitments and promotions in Physics are more difficult to observe as there is an interference with the gender balance among the candidates. Moreover, we encounter a difficulty when selecting a single candidate. When selection operates on larger numbers (more than 4), the proportion of women attains non zero values, whereas when a unique person is selected, it is almost always a man. In addition to these institutional measures, the careers of women scientists also need to be promoted in other ways, such as encouraging their contributions to conferences as invited speakers. Such invitations are essential when applying for a promotion, as they demonstrate international visibility and scientific influence. Unfortunately, there is often a vicious circle where the same scientists, which happen to be men, are invited to most conferences.

Our last action within the French Physics Society (SFP) has been to propose a charter for gender fairness at Conferences in France, that has now been ratified by the SFP, the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and recently by the French Optical Society (SFO). Here the content of this charter is described, with the suggestion that it can also inspire similar actions in other countries.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE CHARTER

In Europe (EU-28), only 30% of the researchers in the government sector (all fields included) are women, and the proportion falls to 20% in the fields of Sciences and Technology (She Figures 2015<sup>i</sup>). In all European countries, when the physicists' figures are available, they are very similar<sup>ii</sup>. In France, 21% of physicists are women (varying between 16% and 25% depending on the physics domain<sup>iii</sup>). The situation is not really better in the U.S. as the AIP reports that less than 23% of physics faculty members are women in the US (AIP statistics 2014<sup>iv</sup>).

Moreover, discrimination takes place towards the few female physicists. As a matter of fact, the percentage of female invited speakers in conferences is even smaller, inducing more difficult employment and promotions for women. In all countries, the proportion of women is the smallest at the top of the academic hierarchy (for example only 10% of full professors are women in the US, from AIP<sup>v</sup>). In France, whereas 25% of assistant professors in physics are women, there are only 16% of female full professors<sup>iii</sup>.

We believe that an important action is to promote fairness for women attending and presenting their scientific results at national and international conferences, following the IUPAP recommendation<sup>vi</sup> at the "Women in Physics" conference in Waterloo, Canada, 2014.

## PREAMBLE

The French Physical Society (SFP), the French Optical Society (SFO) and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) are actively engaged in gender equality, which is today a significant international issue. They work to improve the place of women in physics research and to increase the visibility of women in Physics to attract more numerous young women in the Physics research. The *Women and Physics Committee* of SFP, supported by SFO and CNRS, proposes actions to actively promote fair recognition for women in scientific conferences. One of these actions is to require the signature of the following charter to conference organizers applying for any help of SFP, SFO or CNRS (a label, a funding or a communication action).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reach the percentage of women in the domain (when known <sup>iii</sup> – 20% otherwise) in the conference's committees (scientific committee, program committee, international committee, publication committee, chairperson pool...).

- Reach or exceed the percentage of women in the domain with a floor of 30% (when unknown <sup>iii</sup>, the floor applies) for women invited talks and women oral presentations. The easiest method for organizers to achieve that is to choose female invitees first, before fulfilling any other balance criterion (geographic, thematic, etc.). One will always find male invitees to complete the other criteria.
- Present these percentages and the women participants' percentage<sup>vii</sup> at the closing session or at the general meeting if any during the conference.
- After the conference, send to the 'Women and Physics committee' (mail to [sfp-femmes@sfpnet.fr](mailto:sfp-femmes@sfpnet.fr)) a final written report, including the percentages of women at all levels and describing the actions performed by the organizers to increase these percentages. Examples of such actions could include grants attributed for female PhD students or post-docs; access to childcare during the conference; organization of a "Gender Issues in Physics" session as a parallel session (see <http://meetings.aps.org/Meeting/MAR16/Session/E14>), or any other initiative to improve gender equality.

If you accept to follow these simple guidelines, it will convey a very positive image of your domain towards young scientists, and towards your sponsors and supervisors, in the frame of the equal opportunity policies of the institutes, the countries and Europe. This will have a beneficial impact in the development of your domain and will contribute to the success of your conference.

## CONCLUSION

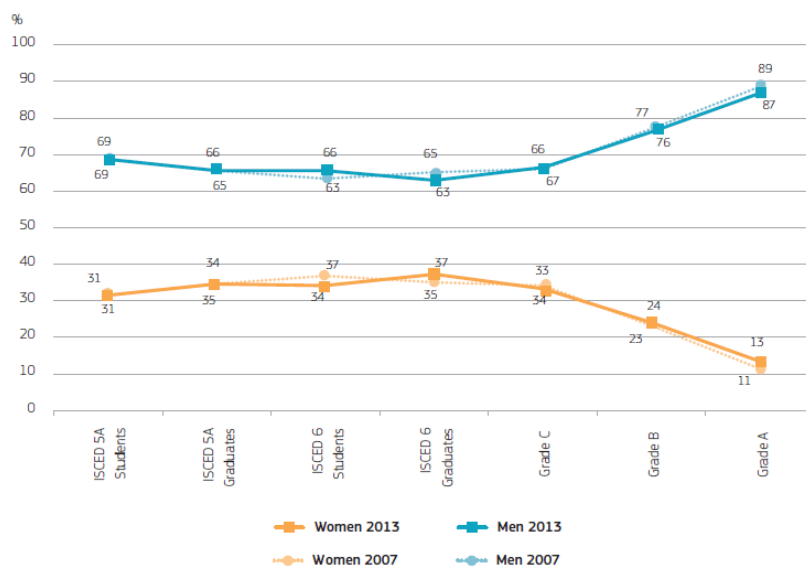
We recommend that the Women Physicists' committees in all national Physics Societies have similar initiatives so that all physics conferences soon become "gender fair"! You are welcome spreading this charter in your own country, upload it on <https://www.sfpnet.fr/charte-de-parite-pour-les-conferences-scientifiques/>

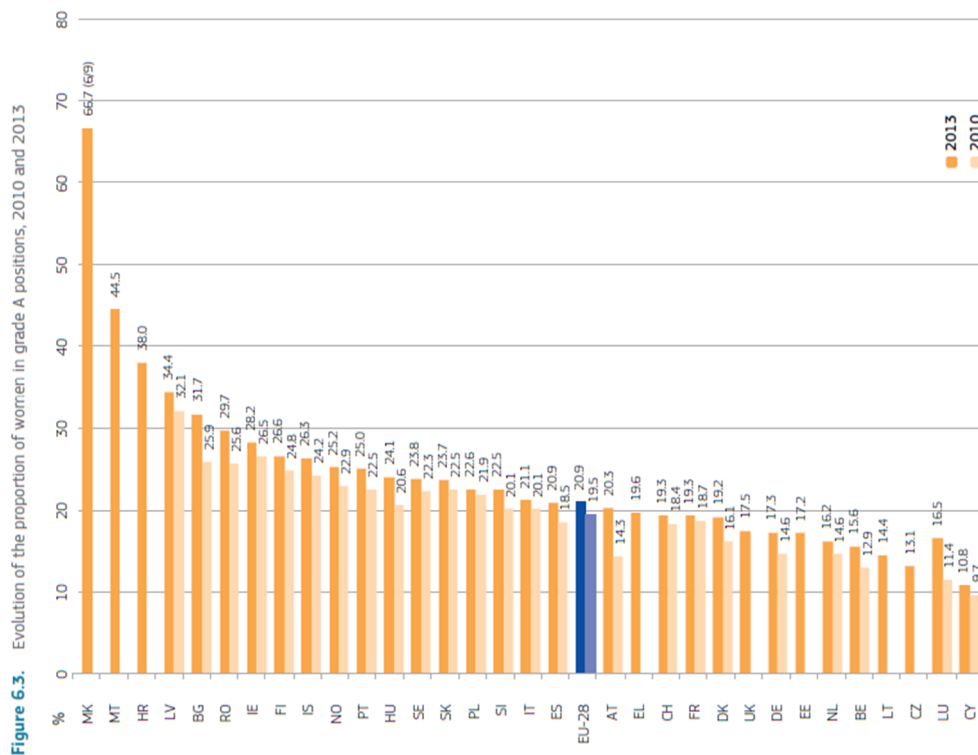
<sup>i</sup> *She Figures 2015, European Commission, European Research Area:*  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/pub\\_gender\\_equality/she\\_figures\\_2015-final.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/pub_gender_equality/she_figures_2015-final.pdf)

'This effect is even more pronounced in the field of science and engineering, where women represented only 13 % of grade A staff in 2013. A generational effect exists amongst grade A researchers, in that women tend to occupy a higher proportion of positions in the youngest age group (49 %) relative to the older age groups (22 %).'

*Statistics in Europe: from She\_Figures\_2015 pp 128 and 131:*

**Figure 6.2.** Proportions of women and men in a typical academic career in science and engineering, students and academic staff, EU-28, 2007–2013





ii The percentage of women researchers in Physics is 13% in Germany ([http://www.dpg-physik.de/veroeffentlichung/broschueren/studien/arbeitsmarktstudie\\_2016.pdf](http://www.dpg-physik.de/veroeffentlichung/broschueren/studien/arbeitsmarktstudie_2016.pdf)) and 16% in Ireland (<http://scitation.aip.org/content/aip/proceeding/aipcp/10.1063/1.4937672>); in the UK: 9% for professors, 19% for senior lecturers/lecturers, and 19% for researchers (<http://scitation.aip.org/content/aip/proceeding/aipcp/10.1063/1.4937691>). In the Netherlands, in the Foundation for Fundamental Research on Matter (FOM), only 10% of the scientific staff is female (<http://scitation.aip.org/content/aip/proceeding/aipcp/10.1063/1.4937680>) whereas 24% of PhD students and post-docs are female.

iii Calculated merging the statistics in “DGRH-A1-1 2015-2016- Gesup mai 2016” and “bilan social et parité” from CNRS 2016:

Domain in Physics (stat. in France 2015-2016)	Full professors in universities and research directors in CNRS				assistant professors in universities and researchers in CNRS				Total				male advan- tage
	Men	Women	Total	% Women	Men	Women	Total	% Women	Men	Women	Total	% Women	
condensed matter and materials	638	133	771	17%	823	342	1 165	29%	1 461	475	1 936	25%	1,6
subatomic physics	319	53	372	14%	345	118	463	25%	664	171	835	20%	1,6
diluted matter and optics	426	74	500	15%	548	118	666	18%	974	192	1 166	16%	1,1
globally in physics	1 383	260	1 643	16%	1 716	578	2 294	25%	3 099	838	3 937	21%	1,4

The male advantage is the ratio of the proportion of males at grade A positions / the proportion of females at grade A positions.

iv <https://www.aip.org/statistics/physics-trends/women-among-physics-faculty-members-0>

v <https://www.aip.org/sites/default/files/statistics/faculty/womenfac-pa-10.pdf>

vi IUPAP: [http://wgwip.df.uba.ar/ICWIP11\\_resolutions\\_draft.pdf](http://wgwip.df.uba.ar/ICWIP11_resolutions_draft.pdf)

**Global Survey in Physics 2011** (>15 000 responses from over 140 countries):  
<https://www.aip.org/statistics/reports/global-survey-physicists>

vii Asking the gender to participants at the registration step will make this very easy.