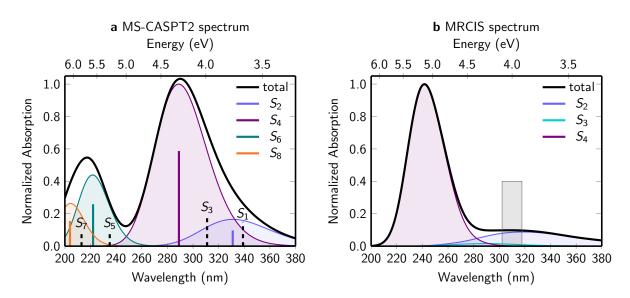
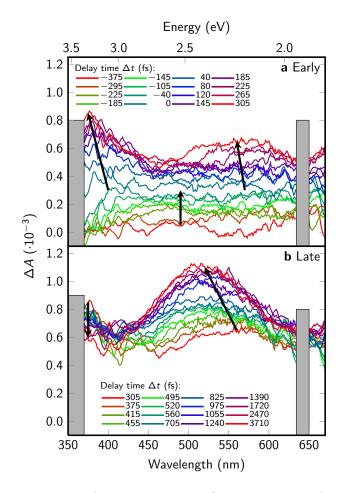


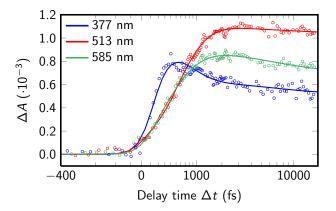
**Supplementary Figure 1: Steady-state absorption spectrum.** The black line corresponds to the absorption spectrum in phosphate buffer saline solution, whereas the dashed lines indicate the excitation wavelengths (308 and 321 nm) used in the femtosecond transient absorption experiments. The solid ticks mark the two absorption maxima of nearly identical intensities at 241 and 269 nm and the shoulder at 219 nm. Residual absorption extending to about 350 nm is also apparent in the spectrum. The absorption spectrum was recorded using a Cary 100 Bio UV-Vis Spectrophotometer (Varian) in 1 cm optical path quartz cells (Starna Cells, Inc.), and was corrected for the background signal of the solvent.



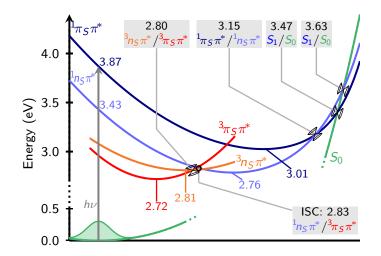
**Supplementary Figure 2: Computed ground state absorption spectra.** The spectrum in panel (a) was computed as the sum over Gaussians (FWHM of 0.7 eV) centered at the vertical excitation energy and with height proportional to the oscillator strength, based on the MS-CASPT2 results from Supplementary Table 1. Dashed lines indicate the position of the dark  $n\pi^*$  states. The spectrum in panel (b) was simulated using the line broadening method, <sup>1</sup> based on 4000 geometries sampled from the Wigner distribution of the ground state harmonic vibrational wave function. At each of the geometries a single point calculation of 4 excited states was performed with the MRCIS method employed in Supplementary Table 1. The total spectrum was computed as a sum of Gaussians (FWHM of only 0.3 eV, since the distribution of geometries). The grey box denotes the energy window from where initial conditions for the dynamics were selected. More discussion can be found in Supplementary Note 1.



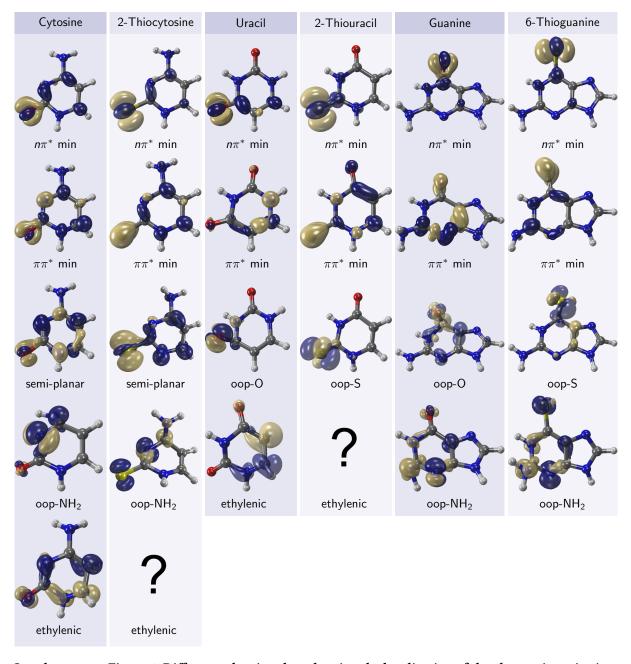
**Supplementary Figure 3: Transient absorption spectra after excitation with 321 nm radiation.** Panel (a) presents the transient spectra at early delay times (-375 to 305 fs), and panel (b) the ones at later delay times (305 fs to 3710 fs). Arrows indicate the grow/decay of the absorption bands with time. The grey boxes block the overtone band of the excitation light (ca. 642 nm) and the stimulated Raman emission due to the overlap of the pump and probe pulses (ca. 360 nm). All spectra were recorded in aqueous buffer solution. Although the data is noisier than the TAS obtained with 308 nm excitation (Fig. 1 in the main manuscript), the two TAS agree well with each other. In the 321 nm TAS, initially (at negative time delays) a constant rise across the whole spectral range is observed. Around 0 fs time delay two bands begin to appear, one with a maximum below 400 nm and the second, broader band, at wavelengths around 550 nm. At a time delay of 305 fs, the 400 nm band reaches its maximum intensity at approximately 375 nm, whereas the band around 550 nm.



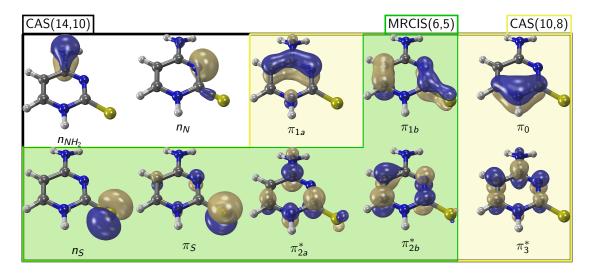
**Supplementary Figure 4: Representative kinetic traces for excitation at 321 nm.** The solid lines present the fitted functions from the target and global analysis. Just as with the 308 nm data, the 321 nm data requires a sequential kinetic model with two lifetimes for an adequate fit of the data. The lifetimes obtained from fitting the 321 nm data agree within error with the lifetimes from the 308 nm data. Reported in the main manuscript are the average lifetimes including both the 321 nm and 308 nm data:  $\tau_1=210 \pm 50$  fs and  $\tau_2=480 \pm 60$  fs.



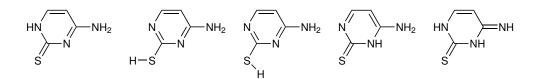
**Supplementary Figure 5: Relaxation mechanism scheme according to MRCIS.** All energies are given in eV. See Supplementary Table 6 for details on the level of theory. The discussion of this figure is given in Supplementary Note 2.



**Supplementary Figure 6: Difference density plots showing the localization of the electronic excitation.** In the plots, gold color denotes the detachment density (i.e., where the electron was excited from) and blue color denotes the attachment density (where the electron was excited to). In all cases, the  $S_0 \rightarrow S_1$  transition has been plotted, as calculated with CASSCF/ANO-L. Question marks denote the "ethylenic" CoIns of 2-thiocytosine and 2-thiouracil, which are not reported in the literature, although for C and U the equivalent CoIns play an important role. For cytosine, three CoIns are shown, and it can be observed that the semi-planar CoIn shows a rather delocalized excitation, while the attachment and detachment densities are localized on the C=N double bond for the oop-NH<sub>2</sub> CoIn and on the C=C double bond for the ethylenic CoIn. On the contrary, in 2-thiocytosine, the semi-planar CoIn shows localization of the detachment density to the sulfur atom, which lowers the energy of the CoIn compared to the equivalent CoIn in cytosine. The oop-NH<sub>2</sub> CoIn of 2-thiocytosine exhibits only a smaller degree of localization on the sulfur atom. In general, the CoIns displayed in the third row show the highest degree of difference density localization on oxygen/sulfur, while the fourth and fifth rows show CoIns with difference density localized on the pyrimidine/purine backbone.



**Supplementary Figure 7: Active space/reference space orbital composition for all computations.** The levels of theory are CASSCF(14,10) and CASSCF(10,8)+MRCIS(6,5). See Supplementary Table 6 for an overview of the levels of theory used to produce each result.



**Supplementary Figure 8: Chemical structures of tautomers of 2-thiocytosine.** These tautomers are reported to be the most stable ones for 2-thiocytosine.<sup>2</sup> From left to right, these are the amino-thion-N<sub>1</sub>H (TC1), amino-thiol (with rotamers TC2a and TC2b), amino-thion-N<sub>3</sub>H (TC3), and imino-thion (TC4) forms. The absolute and relative energies of these tautomers in gas phase and aqueous solution are given in Supplementary Table 7. In the gas phase, TC2 is the most stable tautomer, with an almost 1:1 ratio between the rotamers TC2a and TC2b. The other tautomers are too high in energy, and can be expected to be absent in vacuo. In solution, the very polar TC1 and TC3 tautomers are strongly stabilized and TC1 becomes the most stable tautomer. Based on the energies obtained, we expect that in solution the only tautomer present is TC1. This finding agrees with several other quantum-chemical calculations reported in the literature, <sup>3-8</sup> including one study which included explicit solute-solvent interactions, <sup>2</sup> and experimental studies.<sup>9,10</sup> Based on these results we focus on the TC1 tautomer. This tautomer is present in aqueous solution (the solvent used in the experiments) and is the biologically most relevant one (since TC1 forms 2-thiocytidine).

Supplementary Table 1: Vertical excitation energies, oscillator strengths and characters of the lowest excited states. The employed levels of theory for the calculations are MS-CASPT2(14,10)/ANO-RCC-VQZP//RI-MP2/cc-pVQZ and CASSCF(10,8)+MRCIS(6,5)/cc-pVDZ. All calculations were performed in vacuo. Both electronic structure methods predict that the four lowest excited singlet states are centered on the thiocarbonyl group—two states with  $n_S \pi^*$  character ( $S_1$  and  $S_3$ ) and two states with  $\pi_S \pi^*$  character ( $S_2$  and  $S_4$ ). Higher-lying states originate from excitation from the nitrogen lone pair ( $n_N \pi^*$ ) and from excitation within the pyrimidine  $\pi$  system ( $\pi \pi^*$ ) according to MS-CASPT2. Based on the calculated oscillator strengths, the most intense transitions are the  $\pi_S \pi^*$  ( $S_4$ ) and  $\pi \pi^*$  ( $S_6$ ) states, with energies of 4.29 and 5.59 eV, respectively. The lowest  $\pi_S \pi^*$  state ( $S_2$ ), at 3.74 eV, is an order of magnitude weaker than the  $S_4$  and  $S_6$  states. The  $n_S \pi^*$  and  $n_N \pi^*$  states are also dark according to the calculations. The four lowest triplet states are also centered on the thiocarbonyl group (two  $n_S \pi^*$  and two  $\pi_S \pi^*$  states) but with a different state ordering than the singlet states. The higher triplet states originate from either a pyrimidine  $\pi \pi^*$  transition or an  $n_N \pi^*$  transition, based on the MS-CASPT2 calculations.

| State | MS-CA  | SPT2          |               | MRCIS  |              |               |
|-------|--------|---------------|---------------|--------|--------------|---------------|
|       | E (eV) | $f_{\rm osc}$ | Char.         | E (eV) | $f_{ m osc}$ | Char.         |
| $S_0$ | 0.00   | _             | GS            | 0.00   | _            | GS            |
| $S_1$ | 3.65   | 0.001         | $n_S \pi^*$   | 3.43   | 0.000        | $n_S\pi^*$    |
| $S_2$ | 3.74   | 0.097         | $\pi_S \pi^*$ | 3.87   | 0.047        | $\pi_S \pi^*$ |
| $S_3$ | 3.99   | 0.001         | $n_S \pi^*$   | 4.03   | 0.000        | $n_S\pi^*$    |
| $S_4$ | 4.29   | 0.587         | $\pi_S \pi^*$ | 5.20   | 0.465        | $\pi_S \pi^*$ |
| $S_5$ | 5.26   | 0.003         | $n_N \pi^*$   |        |              |               |
| $S_6$ | 5.59   | 0.258         | $\pi\pi^*$    |        |              |               |
| $S_7$ | 5.83   | 0.005         | $n_N \pi^*$   |        |              |               |
| $S_8$ | 6.06   | 0.155         | $\pi\pi^*$    |        |              |               |
| $T_1$ | 3.37   | _             | $\pi_S \pi^*$ | 3.36   | _            | $n_S \pi^*$   |
| $T_2$ | 3.47   | _             | $\pi_S \pi^*$ | 3.40   | _            | $\pi_S \pi^*$ |
| $T_3$ | 3.64   | —             | $n_S \pi^*$   | 3.74   | _            | $\pi_S \pi^*$ |
| $T_4$ | 3.98   | —             | $n_S \pi^*$   | 4.01   | _            | $n_S \pi^*$   |
| $T_5$ | 4.62   | —             | $\pi\pi^*$    |        |              |               |
| $T_6$ | 5.14   | —             | $n_N \pi^*$   |        |              |               |
| $T_7$ | 5.73   | —             | $\pi\pi^*$    |        |              |               |
| $T_8$ | 6.32   | _             | $n_N \pi^*$   |        |              |               |

**Supplementary Table 2: Vertical excitation energies and oscillator strengths for excited-state absorp-tion.** These results were computed at the MS-CASPT2/CASSCF(14,10)/ANO-L//CASSCF(14,10)/ANO-S level of theory. Only the relevant bright absorptions for each minimum are given (the brightest ones are given in bold). This data was used to simulate the theoretical TAS presented in Fig. 3 in the main manuscript.

| From                         | То             | $\Delta E$ (eV) | $\Delta E (nm)$ | $f_{ m osc}$ |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| $^{-1}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}(S_{2})$ | S <sub>6</sub> | 3.41            | 363             | 0.0646       |
| ${}^{1}n_{S}\pi^{*}(S_{1})$  | $S_5$          | 2.15            | 576             | 0.0043       |
|                              | $S_6$          | 3.72            | 333             | 0.0023       |
| $^{3}n_{S}\pi^{*}(T_{2})$    | T <sub>6</sub> | 2.16            | 574             | 0.0018       |
|                              | $T_8$          | 3.73            | 333             | 0.0015       |
| $^{3}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}(T_{1})$  | T <sub>6</sub> | 2.27            | 546             | 0.0319       |
|                              | $T_7$          | 2.81            | 441             | 0.0390       |
|                              | $T_8$          | 3.87            | 320             | 0.0019       |

**Supplementary Table 3: Energies of important excited-state minima and crossing points.** Energies are given in eV relative to the  $S_0$  minimum energy at the respective level of theory. Energy gaps are given in eV. Bold numbers indicate the states involved in the three-state near-degeneracy region, as mentioned in the main text. Wave function character is given where possible, otherwise adiabatic state ordering is given. These results were computed at the MS-CASPT2(14,10)//CASSCF(14,10)/ANO-L or CASSCF(10,8)+MRCIS(6,5)/cc-pVDZ level of theory. More discussion is given in Supplementary Note 2.

| Geometry   | MS-CAS            | PT2    | MRCIS  |        |
|--|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|
|  | Energy            | Gap    | Energy | Gap    |
| ${}^1n_S\pi^*$ at $S_0$ min                                  | 3.56              | _      | 3.43   | _      |
| ${}^{1}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}$ at $S_{0}$ min                        | 3.65              | _      | 3.87   | _      |
| Min ${}^1n_S\pi^*$   | 2.95              | _      | 2.76   | _      |
| Min ${}^{1}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}$                                   | 3.02              | _      | 3.01   | _      |
| Min ${}^3\pi_S\pi^*$   | 2.85              | _      | 2.72   | _      |
| Min ${}^3n_S\pi^*$   | 3.02              | _      | 2.81   | _      |
| $\operatorname{CoIn}{}^{1}n_{S}\pi^{*}/{}^{1}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}$ | 3.02              | < 0.01 | 3.14   | < 0.01 |
| $\operatorname{CoIn}{}^3\pi_S\pi^*/{}^3n_S\pi^*$             | 3.03              | 0.02   | 2.80   | 0.04   |
| MECP ${}^1n_S\pi^*/{}^3\pi_S\pi^*$                           | 3.05 <sup>a</sup> | < 0.01 | 2.83   | 0.01   |
| MECP ${}^1\pi_S\pi^*/{}^3n_S\pi^*$                           | 3.08 <sup>b</sup> | < 0.01 | _      | _      |
| CoIn $S_1/S_0$ semiplanar 1                                  | 3.82              | 0.01   | 3.47   | < 0.01 |
| CoIn $S_1/S_0$ semiplanar 2                                  | 3.80              | 0.02   | 3.63   | < 0.01 |
| $\operatorname{CoIn} {}^1\pi\pi^*/S_0$ oop-NH <sub>2</sub>   | 3.80              | < 0.01 | 3.68   | < 0.01 |

<sup>*a*</sup> Spin-orbit coupling:  $160 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .

<sup>*b*</sup> Spin-orbit coupling: 170 cm<sup>-1</sup>.

Supplementary Table 4: Fitting parameters for the populations in the SHARC dynamics simulations. The ensemble populations (137 trajectories) of all states (see Fig. 5 in main manuscript) except  $S_1$  were fitted with monoexponential functions of the form  $f(x) = (A - B)e^{-\frac{t}{\tau}} + B$ , where *A* and *B* are the populations at t = 0 and  $t = \infty$ , respectively, and  $\tau$  is the monoexponential time constant. The population of  $S_1$  was not fitted, since it it an intermediate state and its lifetime is mathematically correlated with the other lifetimes.

| States      | A (%) | B (%)    | $\tau$ (fs) | Туре       |
|-------------|-------|----------|-------------|------------|
| $S_0$       | 0     | 10       | 290         | Rising     |
| $S_2$       | 87    | 4        | 160         | Decay      |
| $S_3$       | 13    | 0        | 20          | Decay      |
| $T_1$       | 0     | 59       | 330         | Rising     |
| $T_2$       | 0     | 17       | 100         | Rising     |
| $T_1 + T_2$ | 0     | 74       | 250         | Rising     |
| $S_1$       | - Rem | ainder o | of the pop  | pulation – |

**Supplementary Table 5: Mulliken detachment populations.** This data describes how much electron density is removed from the oxygen/sulfur atom during the respective excitation. Values smaller than 0.2 are denoted "no" in Table 1 in the main manuscript, values between 0.2 and 0.5 as "partially", and values above as "yes". The data is based on CASSCF/ANO-L calculations (CAS(14,10) for C, 2tC, U, 2tU; CAS(18,13) for G, 6tG) followed by a Mulliken analysis of the difference density between ground state and excited state. The difference densities are shown in Supplementary Fig. 6.

| Critical Point                | Mullike | n detachment |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------------|
|                               | C       | 2tC          |
| $^{-1}n\pi^*$ min             | 0.51    | 0.68         |
| $^{1}\pi\pi^{*}$ min          | 0.36    | 0.35         |
| $S_0/S_1$ semiplanar          | 0.54    | 0.92         |
| $S_0/S_1$ oop-NH <sub>2</sub> | 0.06    | 0.39         |
| $S_0/S_1$ ethylenic           | 0.16    | _            |
| Critical Point                | Mullike | n detachment |
|                               | U       | 2tU          |
| $^{1}n\pi^{*}$ min            | 0.62    | 0.81         |
| $^{1}\pi\pi^{*}$ min          | 0.09    | 0.63         |
| $S_0/S_1$ oop-Y (Y=O/S)       | 0.03    | 0.75         |
| $S_0/S_1$ ethylenic           | 0.75    | —            |
| Critical Point                | Mullike | n detachment |
|                               | G       | 6tG          |
| $^{1}n\pi^{*}$ min            | 0.68    | 0.77         |
| $^{1}\pi\pi^{*}$ min          | 0.36    | 0.35         |
| $S_0/S_1$ oop-Y (Y=O/S)       | 0.07    | 0.64         |
| $S_0/S_1$ oop-NH <sub>2</sub> | 0.03    | 0.20         |

**Supplementary Table 6: Levels of theory used in the calculations.** In column "State-Averaging", "3S or 3T" means two separate calculations, averaging over 3 singlet states in the first one, and averaging over 3 triplet states in the second one, as applicable. "4S+2T" means simultaneously averaging over 4 singlets and 2 triplets. "various" refers to the minimum number of roots required for each individual calculation (SS-CASSCF for  $S_0$  minimum, SA2 for  $S_1$  minimum, SA3 for  $S_2$  minimum, etc.). "MRCIS" is shorthand for MRCIS(6,5)/cc-pVDZ, orbitals based on SA(4S+2T)-CASSCF(10,8)/cc-pVDZ.

| Step                     | Method                               | Basis Set      | State-               | Program  | Used In                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
|                          |                                      |                | Averaging            |          |                               |
|                          | - Tautor                             |                |                      |          |                               |
| Opt/Freq                 | RI-MP2                               | cc-pVTZ        | _                    | Orca     | Supp Tab 7                    |
| Energies                 | RI-CCSD(T)                           | cc-pVTZ        | _                    | Orca     | Supp Tab 7                    |
|                          | <ul> <li>Excited-state of</li> </ul> | ptimizations – |                      |          |                               |
| $S_0$ minimum            | RI-MP2                               | cc-pVQZ        | _                    | Orca     | Supp Tab 1, Supp Fig 2        |
| Minima                   | CASSCF(14,10)                        | ANO-S          | various <sup>c</sup> | Molcas   | Supp Tab 2, Fig 3             |
| CoIn, MECP               | CASSCF(14,10)                        | 6-31G*         | various <sup>c</sup> | Molpro   | MEPs                          |
| MEPs                     | CASSCF(14,10)                        | ANO-S          | various <sup>c</sup> | Molcas   | Fig 4                         |
| Min, CoIn, MECP (reopt.) | MS-CASPT2(14,10)                     | ANO-L          | 3S or 3T             | Molcas   | Supp Tab 3, Fig 4             |
| Min, CoIn, MECP          | MRCIS                                | cc-pVDZ        | 4S+2T                | Columbus | Supp Tabs 1, 3                |
|                          |                                      | -              |                      |          | Supp Figs 2, 5                |
|                          | <ul> <li>Excited-stat</li> </ul>     | e energies —   |                      |          |                               |
| Ground state spectrum    | MS-CASPT2(14,10)                     | ANO-RCC-VQZP   | 9S or 8T             | Molcas   | Supp Tab 1, Supp Fig 2        |
| -                        | MRCIS                                | cc-pVDZ        | 4S+2T                | Columbus | Supp Tab 1, Supp Fig 2        |
| Transient spectra        | MS-CASPT2(14,10)                     | ANO-L          | 15S or 15T           | Molcas   | Supp Tab 2, Fig 3             |
| Min, CoIn, MECP          | MS-CASPT2(14,10)                     | ANO-L          | 3S or 3T             | Molcas   | Supp Tab 3, Fig 4             |
|                          | MRCIS                                | cc-pVDZ        | 4S+2T                | Columbus | Supp Tab 3, Supp Fig 5        |
|                          | — Dynai                              | mics —         |                      |          |                               |
| SHARC simulations        | MRCIS                                | cc-pVDZ        | 4S+2T                | Columbus | Supp Tab 4, Fig 5             |
|                          | – Difference                         | Densities —    |                      |          |                               |
| C, 2tC, U, 2tU           | CASSCF(14,10)                        | ANO-L          | 4S                   | Molcas   | Tab 1, Supp Fig 6, Supp Tab 5 |
| G, 6tG                   | CASSCF(18,13)                        | ANO-L          | 4S                   | Molcas   | Tab 1, Supp Fig 6, Supp Tab 5 |

Supplementary Table 7: Energies, populations and dipole moments of 2-thiocytosine tautomers.  $E_{SP}$  is the RI-CCSD(T) single point energy, ZPE is the RI-MP2 zero-point energy,  $E_{rel}$  is the energy relative to the most stable tautomer, and  $\mu$  is the permanent dipole moment (at CCSD(T) level). The temperature assumed for the calculation of the populations is 298 K. The geometries and ZPE were computed at the RI-MP2/cc-pVTZ<sup>11-13</sup> level of theory and the single-point energies at the RI-CCSD(T)/cc-pVTZ level of theory (in vacuum and in water COSMO<sup>14</sup>). These calculations were performed with the ORCA 3.0 package.<sup>15</sup>

| Tautomer | $E_{\rm SP}$ | ZPE      | $E_{\rm total}$ | $E_{\rm rel}$ | E <sub>rel</sub> | Population | μ       |
|----------|--------------|----------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|------------|---------|
|          | $(E_h)$      | $(E_h)$  | $(E_h)$         | (eV)          | (kcal/mol)       |            | (Debye) |
|          |              |          | — Gas Phase     | e —           |                  |            |         |
| TC1      | -717.970916  | 0.097153 | -717.873764     | 0.222         | 5.12             | 0%         | 7.24    |
| TC2a     | -717.975696  | 0.093771 | -717.881926     | 0.000         | 0.00             | 57%        | 3.59    |
| TC2b     | -717.975446  | 0.093792 | -717.881654     | 0.007         | 0.17             | 43%        | 4.29    |
| TC3      | -717.959488  | 0.096858 | -717.862630     | 0.525         | 12.10            | 0%         | 8.29    |
| TC4      | -717.970505  | 0.097514 | -717.872991     | 0.243         | 5.60             | 0%         | 7.93    |
|          |              |          | - COSMO (wa     | ter) —        |                  |            |         |
| TC1      | -718.003190  | 0.097295 | -717.905894     | 0.000         | 0.00             | 100%       |         |
| TC2a     | -717.991223  | 0.093254 | -717.897970     | 0.216         | 4.97             | 0%         |         |
| TC2b     | -717.991339  | 0.093288 | -717.898051     | 0.213         | 4.92             | 0%         |         |
| TC3      | -717.994842  | 0.097709 | -717.897132     | 0.238         | 5.49             | 0%         |         |
| TC4      | -717.992620  | 0.097743 | -717.894877     | 0.300         | 6.91             | 0%         |         |

## Supplementary Note 1: Simulated Ground State Spectrum

A ground-state absorption spectrum of 2-thiocytosine was simulated as a sum of Gaussians centered at the vertical excitation energies obtained from MS-CASPT2 (Supplementary Fig. 2a). Notable contributions to the spectrum come from the  $S_2$ ,  $S_4$ ,  $S_6$  and  $S_8$ , which are of  $\pi_S \pi^*$  or  $\pi \pi^*$  character and show significant oscillator strengths (see Supplementary Table 1). Supplementary Fig. 2b shows the simulated absorption spectrum calculated with MRCIS with 4 excited states based on 4000 geometries from a Wigner distribution. Also shown is the energy range for selecting initial conditions for the dynamics simulations (grey box), in accord with the experimental conditions.

Similar to the MS-CASPT2 spectrum, the MRCIS spectrum reveals  $S_2$  and  $S_4$  as the main contributing states. However, compared to the experimental and the MS-CASPT2 spectrum, the MRCIS spectrum shows a very broad and red-shifted  $S_2$  absorption band (between 290 and 400 nm) and an  $S_4$  band with the correct width but shifted to too high energies (242 nm instead of 268 nm). The main reason for these deviations is the less complete description of electronic correlation in the MRCIS calculations. In particular, due to the small reference space employed, our MRCIS setup does not describe well higher excited states; however, the lowest excited states, which are the relevant states for the dynamics, are reasonably well described. Indeed, the focus of this work is the excited-state dynamics after UV-A/UV-B excitation leading to the population of  $S_2$ , and hence the inaccurate description of the  $S_4$  state is not relevant.

## **Supplementary Note 2: Critical Points**

Supplementary Table 3 collects energies of the relevant critical points of the excited-state potential energy surfaces (PESs), including minima, conical intersections (CoIns), and singlet-triplet minimum-energy crossing points (MECPs), on the MS-CASPT2 and MRCIS levels of theory for comparison.

Compared to the MS-CASPT2 results, the optimization of the critical points at the MRCIS level of theory, which was employed in the dynamics simulations, yields a slightly different picture (see energies in Supplementary Table 3 and Supplementary Fig. 5). Energy deviations (relative to MS-CASPT2) for all singlet and triplet minima and critical points are between 0.1 and 0.2 eV, with the notable exception of the semiplanar  $S_1/S_0$  CoIns. At the MRCIS level of theory, the relaxation mechanism after excitation to the  $S_2$  in the Franck-Condon region begins with a decay of the system to the  ${}^{1}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}$  ( $S_2$ ) minimum at 3.01 eV. The  ${}^{1}n_{S}\pi^{*}/{}^{1}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}$  is located at 3.14 eV, resulting in a 0.13 eV barrier for  $S_2 \rightarrow S_1$  interconversion. From this CoIn, the  ${}^{1}n_{S}\pi^{*}$  ( $S_1$ ) minimum can be reached at 2.76 eV. Ground state relaxation is predicted to be possible from three different CoIns at energies of 3.47, 3.63 and 3.68 eV—giving a minimum barrier of 0.61 eV. ISC to the triplet manifold is predicted to occur around the  ${}^{1}n_{S}\pi^{*}/{}^{3}\pi_{S}^{*}\pi^{*}$  MECP at 2.83 eV (0.07 eV above the  ${}^{1}n_{S}\pi^{*}$  minimum). In agreement with the MS-CASPT2 calculations, the lowest-energy triplet minimum is the  ${}^{3}\pi_{S}\pi^{*}$  minimum at the MRCIS level of theory.

# **Supplementary Note 3: Geometry Data of Critical Points**

In the following we present all geometries used in Fig. 4 in the main manuscript (optimized on CASSCF level of theory, see Supplementary Table 6).

| -  |   | -   |   |
|----|---|---|---|
| 13 | S0 Minimun  | n   |   |
| N  | +3.53273<br>+2.225133<br>+1.577278<br>+1.785903<br>+0.750385<br>+2.791320<br>+2.456170<br>+3.159487<br>+1.494976<br>+4.066211<br>+4.488756<br>+3.875844<br>+6.034968                | +3.551459<br>+3.342086<br>+3.162683<br>+3.363210<br>+3.193983<br>+3.602581<br>+3.567833<br>+3.850901<br>+3.571747<br>+3.840554<br>+3.862179<br>+3.563335<br>+4.230744                   | -2.072505<br>-2.349205<br>-1.504718<br>-3.635321<br>-3.880958<br>-4.634191<br>-5.947167<br>-6.607831<br>-6.232838<br>-4.352504<br>-3.063904<br>-1.123794<br>-2.568172 |
| 13 |   |   |   |
| N  | S1(npi*) N<br>+3.528057<br>+2.196922<br>+1.579122<br>+1.806226<br>+0.785756<br>+2.727192<br>+2.458095<br>+3.165042<br>+1.528608<br>+4.096845<br>+4.415333<br>+3.869092<br>+6.083415 | Minimum<br>+3.697829<br>+3.315392<br>+3.083823<br>+3.277415<br>+3.023873<br>+3.550403<br>+3.503051<br>+3.983426<br>+3.797604<br>+3.730629<br>+3.810726<br>+3.862412<br>+4.066719        | -2.054831<br>-2.299455<br>-1.452035<br>-3.646091<br>-3.893672<br>-4.637680<br>-6.006251<br>-6.543240<br>-6.263812<br>-4.351257<br>-3.097042<br>-1.122510<br>-2.605234 |
| 13 |   |   |   |
| N  | S2(pipi*)<br>+3.545661<br>+2.186990<br>+1.542338<br>+1.805209<br>+0.776111<br>+2.737465<br>+2.491270<br>+3.140834<br>+1.535957<br>+4.091109<br>+4.405504<br>+3.897533<br>+6.083721  | Minimum<br>+3.624027<br>+3.331484<br>+3.188780<br>+3.320047<br>+3.108382<br>+3.560019<br>+3.460534<br>+4.014694<br>+3.646007<br>+3.811275<br>+3.830655<br>+3.641886<br>+4.165488        | -2.040796<br>-2.301288<br>-1.454753<br>-3.647600<br>-3.899321<br>-4.636299<br>-6.007481<br>-6.546747<br>-6.273482<br>-4.336188<br>-3.082142<br>-1.099058<br>-2.647956 |
| 13 | T1(pipi*)   | Minimum   |   |
| C  | +3.547144<br>+2.190412<br>+1.538543<br>+1.803981<br>+0.774560<br>+2.733596<br>+2.495569<br>+3.144599<br>+1.538191<br>+4.079314<br>+4.415085<br>+3.923881<br>+6.054829               | $\begin{array}{r} +3.591135\\ +3.326781\\ +3.243318\\ +3.326878\\ +3.121134\\ +3.558448\\ +3.461710\\ +4.011208\\ +3.600324\\ +3.857921\\ +3.848811\\ +3.578774\\ +4.176861\end{array}$ | -2.053086<br>-2.289430<br>-1.440960<br>-3.652582<br>-3.908331<br>-4.634393<br>-6.000707<br>-6.543796<br>-6.283933<br>-4.347002<br>-3.070547<br>-1.119899<br>-2.628445 |

| 13<br>T2(npi*) Minimum<br>N +3.527597 +3.701936 -2.027528<br>C +2.184601 +3.331819 -2.303473<br>H +1.534364 +3.194741 -1.459630<br>C +1.807602 +3.302594 -3.640920<br>H +0.785091 +3.059691 -3.892163<br>C +2.737971 +3.559862 -4.634362<br>N +2.488223 +3.464090 -6.007278<br>H +3.163667 +3.987790 -6.544958<br>H +1.545028 +3.703170 -6.274463<br>N +4.086754 +3.802122 -4.324747<br>C +4.396447 +3.841736 -3.076309<br>H +3.894033 +3.599901 -1.096336<br>S +6.088325 +4.153847 -2.690938        |
|--|
| 13<br>S1(npi*)/S2(pipi*) CoIn<br>N +3.554550 +3.587656 -2.043624<br>C +2.181685 +3.352189 -2.301423<br>H +1.551585 +3.155167 -1.455323<br>C +1.797964 +3.332628 -3.644484<br>H +0.768185 +3.124767 -3.895296<br>C +2.730709 +3.565480 -4.634402<br>N +2.493352 +3.456971 -6.005081<br>H +3.153259 +3.997050 -6.546143<br>H +1.541715 +3.639682 -6.285031<br>N +4.081422 +3.832175 -4.332255<br>C +4.403131 +3.833628 -3.081617<br>H +3.898869 +3.662744 -1.101840<br>S +6.083283 +4.163160 -2.646588 |
| 13<br>T1(pipi*)/T2(npi*) CoIn<br>N +3.496169 +3.826014 -2.002564<br>C +2.186199 +3.349094 -2.309479<br>H +1.546639 +3.142567 -1.470199<br>C +1.813739 +3.280680 -3.629251<br>H +0.809761 +2.970649 -3.879937<br>C +2.744255 +3.578883 -4.633941<br>N +2.472050 +3.479884 -6.004753<br>H +3.187714 +3.933430 -6.554461<br>H +1.557341 +3.820500 -6.262949<br>N +4.078375 +3.794387 -4.306702<br>C +4.381749 +3.864002 -3.064704<br>H +3.870034 +3.582258 -1.097851<br>S +6.095679 +4.139930 -2.756318 |
| 13<br>S0/S1 CoIn semiplanar 1<br>N +2.208365 +1.725585 -0.300734<br>C +0.770699 +1.746609 -0.474810<br>H +0.254836 +2.385111 +0.231193<br>C +0.386316 +1.628132 -1.907828<br>H -0.504885 +1.077980 -2.177521<br>C +1.261090 +2.006697 -2.839050<br>N +1.221545 +1.750683 -4.218041<br>H +1.569134 +2.541240 -4.743141<br>H +0.288539 +1.517125 -4.527934<br>N +2.548328 +2.599096 -2.486630<br>C +2.917521 +2.228115 -1.338050<br>H +2.654871 +1.010030 +0.261169                                    |

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| S0/S1 CoIn semiplanar 2<br>N +3.585134 +3.605924 -2.022385<br>C +2.148488 +3.844093 -2.252387<br>H +1.544468 +3.452936 -1.444258<br>C +1.780437 +3.483307 -3.646507<br>H +0.832136 +3.014056 -3.872836<br>C +2.686796 +3.701750 -4.595048<br>N +2.647551 +3.315373 -5.952665<br>H +2.980242 +4.071035 -6.537134<br>H +1.705823 +3.076496 -6.233382<br>N +4.013499 +4.250300 -4.270572<br>C +4.352740 +3.939213 -3.097357<br>H +3.885462 +2.802690 -1.480998<br>S +6.076896 +4.146136 -2.567622 |  |
|--|--|
| 13   |  |
| S0/S1 CoIn oopNH2  |  |
| N + 0.412354 + 0.440880 + 0.587459   |  |
| C -0.942412 +0.633675 +0.331796  |  |
| H -1.612367 -0.160366 +0.624070  |  |
| C -1.307102 +1.774150 -0.300763  |  |
| H -2.338744 +1.951150 -0.560618  |  |
| C -0.230357 +2.783534 -0.452072  |  |
| N +0.097795 +3.475579 +0.756015  |  |
| H +0.774770 +4.206144 +0.574459  |  |
| H -0.720482 +3.881423 +1.191328<br>N +0.989358 +2.132817 -0.945525   |  |
|  |  |
| ( + 1 300800 + 1 103870 -0 738017  |  |
| C +1.300890 +1.103870 -0.238017<br>H +0.742112 -0.374375 +1.075210   |  |

| 13<br>S1(npi*)/T1(pipi*) M<br>N +3.559357 +3.554490<br>C +2.180270 +3.368597<br>H +1.513235 +3.307688<br>C +1.801921 +3.308297<br>H +0.764921 +3.117828<br>C +2.746057 +3.496371<br>N +2.429575 +3.440996<br>H +3.221022 +3.633465<br>H +1.617484 +3.965916<br>N +4.065748 +3.861080<br>C +4.382685 +3.873001 | -2.010884<br>-2.293023<br>-1.449960<br>-3.625083<br>-3.865450<br>-4.644489<br>-5.998719<br>-6.591386<br>-6.288919<br>-4.304187<br>-3.063252 |
|---|---|
| H +3.931874 +3.301071   | -1.112601   |
| S +6.025554 +4.474502   | -2.725643   |
| 13  |   |
| C2(niniu) (T2(nniu)   |   |
| S2(pipi*)/T2(npi*)  | 1ECP  |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
|   | -2.031694<br>-2.317829  |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| C +2.753560 +3.535515   | -4.638383   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| C +2.753560 +3.535515   | -4.638383   |
| N +2.470264 +3.436243   | -6.006704   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| C +2.753560 +3.535515   | -4.638383   |
| N +2.470264 +3.436243   | -6.006704   |
| H +3.172229 +3.895899   | -6.569023   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| C +2.753560 +3.535515   | -4.638383   |
| N +2.470264 +3.436243   | -6.006704   |
| H +3.172229 +3.895899   | -6.569023   |
| H +1.539019 +3.729092   | -6.267422   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| C +2.753560 +3.535515   | -4.638383   |
| N +2.470264 +3.436243   | -6.006704   |
| H +3.172229 +3.895899   | -6.569023   |
| H +1.539019 +3.729092   | -6.267422   |
| N +4.100240 +3.725484   | -4.328361   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| C +2.753560 +3.535515   | -4.638383   |
| N +2.470264 +3.436243   | -6.006704   |
| H +3.172229 +3.895899   | -6.569023   |
| H +1.539019 +3.729092   | -6.267422   |
| N +4.100240 +3.725484   | -4.328361   |
| C +4.411492 +3.829360   | -3.094600   |
| N +3.518515 +3.802662   | -2.031694   |
| C +2.192109 +3.419928   | -2.317829   |
| H +1.538498 +3.289444   | -1.476177   |
| C +1.810954 +3.332857   | -3.622232   |
| H +0.781463 +3.101772   | -3.854368   |
| C +2.753560 +3.535515   | -4.638383   |
| N +2.470264 +3.436243   | -6.006704   |
| H +3.172229 +3.895899   | -6.569023   |
| H +1.539019 +3.729092   | -6.267422   |
| N +4.100240 +3.725484   | -4.328361   |

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