

NEWSLETTER #4

CLUSTER-BASED APPROACH TO INTEGRATE GENDER
MAINSTREAMING STRATEGIES IN EUROPEAN SMES



PENELOPE PROJECT AFTER TWO YEARS: KEY MILESTONES AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS ADDRESSED AT THE 3RD MEETING IN BUCHAREST

Bucharest, October 2024 — The PENELOPE Project partners recently met for the third project meeting in Bucharest. Hosted by INCDTP (The Romanian National Research & Development Institute for Textile and Leather), member of the Romanian Textile Concept Cluster, the two-day event (October 10-11, 2024) enabled a review of the progress and planning the next steps in achieving the project goals.

Over the last two years, our work has been focused on promoting gender mainstreaming strategies in SMEs by developing innovative practices tailored to industry clusters. Through all our activities we aim to progress towards addressing critical factors that enable the advancement of gender-inclusive practices in the workplace, empowering organizations to create more equitable environments for both women and men, keeping in mind the objectives to:

1. Develop Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming.
2. Build Gender-Inclusive Cultures in SMEs.
3. Foster Online Cooperation and Blended Learning.
4. Develop Tailored Training Methodologies.

Next Key Milestone: The Upcoming Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

At the meeting in Bucharest, we made significant strides in developing PENELOPE's Virtual Learning Environment, a digital platform that will serve as the next major milestone in the project that will provide a space for SMEs and clusters to access critical resources on gender mainstreaming, including gamified learning modules and innovative educational tools.



From left to right: Nicoleta Nicorescu (INCDTP), Mirela Greti Puiu (RTxC), Sara Wechsler (RTxC), Lisa Besnard (France Clusters), Audrey Demore (Oxalis Scop), Lucia Seel (LSIC) and online: Raquel Ortega Martinez (AMUEBLA Cluster) and Christine André (Oxalis Scop).

This collaborative effort is a crucial step toward the creation of impactful training programs, enabling clusters and SMEs to better integrate gender equality into their operations. The upcoming VLE will make knowledge and best practices easily accessible, helping to shape more equitable and diverse workplaces across the EU.

The meeting in Bucharest marked also the starting point in the development of the training materials for both cluster organisations and companies (SMEs) and decisions were taken upon their structure, kicking off the work on their preparation.

PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Our work was presented and further promoted in the European Cluster Community. On October 23rd, 2024, our representative Lucia Seel presented in detail to 50 registered participants the achievements of the project so far at the 7th edition of the BEHEALTH & DIGITAL 2024 hybrid international event in the healthcare sector organised by the ROHEALTH – The Romanian Health and Bioeconomy Cluster. Its cluster president, Flaviana Rotaru, is also one of the speakers in our video toolkit that we will soon launch.

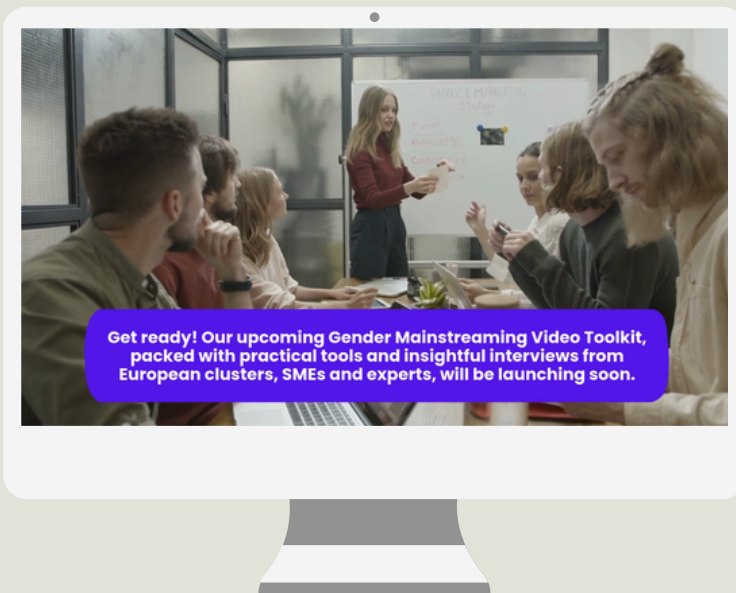


FURTHER PROMOTION HAS BEEN DONE ON SOCIAL MEDIA, ON OUR LINKEDIN PAGE (WHICH COUNTS WITH ALMOST 300 FOLLOWERS) AND ON VARIOUS OTHER EXTERNAL MEDIA.

OUR NEXT ACTIONS

As the project enters in its final year, we are gearing up to deliver three impactful outcomes:

- 🗂️ A video toolkit featuring gender equality strategies and interviews with businesses and organizations on gender mainstreaming.
- 📺 A virtual learning platform with specialized training courses for SMEs and cluster managers.
- 👥 A methodology for conducting gender equality awareness workshops.



For now, watch the teaser video for our upcoming Gender Mainstreaming Video Toolkit, packed with practical tools and insightful interviews from clusters, SMEs and experts in gender equality from all around Europe. Stay tuned for a deep dive into how gender equality drives innovation and growth!

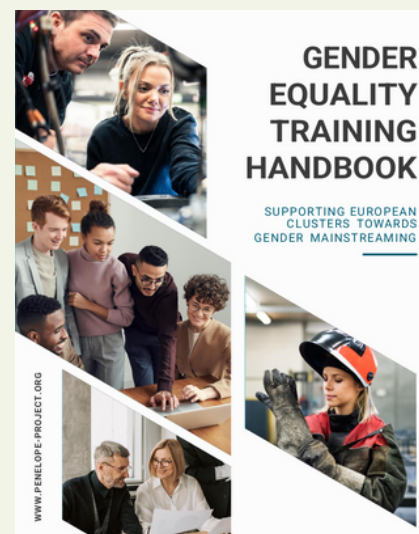
**Watch the full
teaser video [here](#).**

GENDER MAINSTREAMING HANDBOOK FOR CLUSTER TEAMS

If you are not one of the 420+ people who have downloaded our “PENELOPE Gender Equality Training Handbook: Supporting Clusters Towards European Gender Mainstreaming”, you can do it here and explore what it has to offer to inspire and support you in your work.

The handbook is divided into three parts:

1. **Vocabulary and Key Concepts** – Provides essential definitions related to gender equality at work.
2. **Good Practices and Interviews** – Shares examples and insights from various multinational organizations on advancing gender equality in the workplace.
3. **Gender Mainstreaming Tools** – Offers practical tools and guidelines to help design and implement organizational processes that promote gender equality.



DOWNLOAD [HERE](#)

WE PUT UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT OUR INTERVIEWEES!

As in our past newsletter, we take pride to present you our series of 20 interviews with personalities from the clusters and networks world: Cluster managers, cluster policy makers or network leaders in various European countries. We learned from their experiences about the challenges encountered when it comes to creating gender equality, what levers are seen as possible to induce change towards a more gender-balanced and inclusive approach in companies, and about their personal motivation to support gender equality. Today we have the pleasure to introduce you the next four of them with their “best-of” quotes:



DELPHINE REMY-BOUTANG,

FOUNDER OF JFD, BUSINESS ANGEL AND OFFICER OF THE NATIONAL ORDRE DU MÉRITE

“BY PRIORITIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN OUR ORGANIZATIONS, NETWORKS, PUBLIC AUTHORITIES, AND GOVERNMENTS, WE CAN UNLOCK THE FULL POTENTIAL OF WOMEN, DRIVE INNOVATION, AND CREATE THRIVING ENVIRONMENTS WHERE EVERYONE CAN SUCCEED”.

THE FULL INTERVIEW CAN BE READ [HERE](#).

WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WARMLY CONGRATULATE DELPHINE REMY-BOUTANG FOR BEING RECENTLY AWARDED THE FRENCH NATIONAL ORDER OF MERIT AND INVITE YOU TO READ HER SPEECH (IN FRENCH) [HERE](#), BRAVO FOR A WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION!



OLA SVEDIN,

CEO OF MOBILE HEIGHTS & CHAIRPERSON OF CLUSTERS OF SWEDEN

“BY WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, THE ACADEMIA AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS, CLUSTERS DRIVE CHANGE. WE NEED TO WORK ON MANY LEVELS WHEN IT COMES TO GENDER EQUALITY”.

THE FULL INTERVIEW CAN BE READ [HERE](#).



MARIE-NOËLLE TINÉ-DYÈVRE,

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE FRENCH MARITIME CLUSTER & PRESIDENT OF WISTA FRANCE

“SMES MUST ALSO BE CONVINCED OF THE IMPORTANCE AND THE INTEREST OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN THEIR TEAMS AND GIVE THEMSELVES THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE IT. I CAN SEE THAT MENTALITIES ARE CHANGING. BUT THE MOBILIZATION OF ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ACTORS IS ESSENTIAL TO ACCELERATE THESE CHANGES”.

THE FULL INTERVIEW CAN BE READ [HERE](#).



KRISTINA ŠERMUKŠNYTĖ-ALEŠIŪNIENĖ,

CEO OF AGRIFOOD LITHUANIA

“ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF FAIRNESS OR COMPLIANCE; IT’S A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND SOCIETAL ADVANCEMENT. IT IS TIME THAT WE MOVE BEYOND ACKNOWLEDGING GENDER INEQUALITY TO ACTIVELY IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES”.

THE FULL INTERVIEW CAN BE READ [HERE](#).