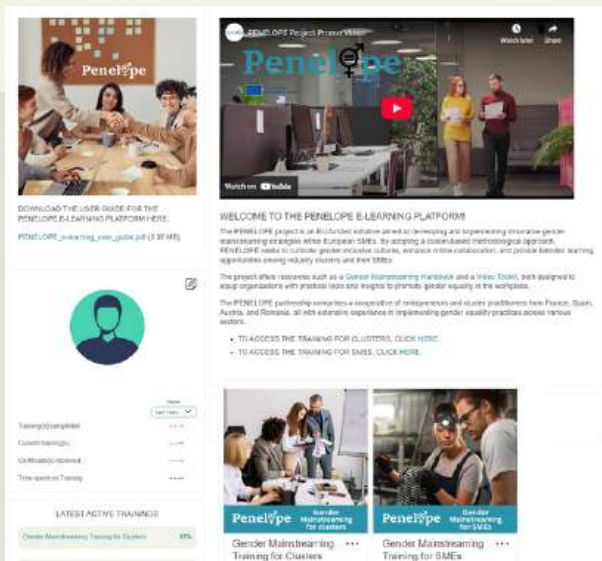


# NEWSLETTER #5

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



**OUR E-LEARNING  
PLATFORM IS NOW LIVE!**  
AND READY TO ENRICH YOUR  
KNOWLEDGE ON HOW GENDER  
MAINSTREAMING CAN  
CONTRIBUTE TO MORE  
COMPETITIVENESS!

We proudly announce the launch of our E-Learning Platform, a cutting-edge online space tailored to support EU clusters, SMEs, and policymakers in advancing gender equality in the workplace towards gender mainstreaming.

Developed through collaboration across European partners and co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme, this innovative tool is now live and accessible.

### Why This Platform Matters

As gender equality becomes a critical success factor for business competitiveness and social cohesion, the PENELOPE E-Learning Platform offers a practical response: it empowers both clusters and SMEs to integrate gender mainstreaming into their activities. The platform addresses the urgent need for actionable, context-specific learning tools to dismantle stereotypes, improve workplace culture, and enable equal opportunities across sectors.

### A Platform with Purpose

The E-Learning Platform has been designed with three core objectives:

1. Raise awareness of gender mainstreaming among European cluster organizations and their member SMEs.
2. Foster capacity-building through the delivery of innovative, engaging, and easily accessible online training.
3. Encourage practical implementation of gender equality practices by equipping users with knowledge, tools, and real-world examples from across Europe.

# PENELOPE E-LEARNING PLATFORM

## What You Will Find on the Platform

The E-Learning Platform is built to serve both cluster and SMEs' staff. Its main features include:

- Two dedicated e-learning formats: one for cluster organisations, the other for SMEs.
- Tailored learning paths for different user profiles.
- Gamified content to enhance engagement—using badges, quizzes, interactive modules, and creative scenarios.
- Interactive learning resources compatible with various digital tools and platforms.
- Digital certification upon module completion.

The training contents are inspired by the insights and tools from the PENELOPE Gender Mainstreaming Handbook, ensuring learners gain both theoretical knowledge and practical guidance to initiate organisational change.

## Co-Created by Experts, Powered by Feedback

The platform was co-designed by the PENELOPE partners, ensuring technical know-how including data safety, usability, and relevance. Input from internal and external test groups shaped the final system, reflecting real user needs from clusters and SMEs alike.

## Take a step towards a more inclusive workplace

This is more than a digital tool—it is a call to action. By joining the E-Learning Platform and using it, stakeholders become part of a broader mission to reshape their business ecosystem through equality, inclusion, and innovation.



**ACCESS THE PLATFORM  
NOW AND START YOUR  
TRANSFORMATION  
JOURNEY!**

**START BY CREATING AN  
ACCOUNT WITH THE NAME  
THAT YOU WANT TO SEE ON  
YOUR COMPLETION  
CERTIFICATE!**

**[REGISTER HERE](https://www.penelope-project.org)**

## LINZ MEETING MARKS PENELOPE'S STRATEGIC SHIFT INTO FINAL PHASE

**Linz, April 2025** — On April 10th–11th, 2025, the partners of the PENELOPE Project convened in Linz for their fourth project meeting. Hosted by Lucia Seel International Consulting GmbH, the two-day event marked an important moment for the consortium: reviewing project progress, refining the final steps ahead of an upcoming major milestone, and outlining the roadmap for the remaining six months of the project.

Over the past months, the consortium has concentrated its efforts on developing a [video toolkit](#) offering practical resources for SMEs on how to implement gender equality actions. Looking ahead, an innovative methodology is being prepared to support clusters in delivering educational workshops aimed at embedding gender mainstreaming strategies within their ecosystems.



*From left to right: Marlene Haudum (Human Capital Management), Audrey Demore (Oxalis SCOP), Raquel Ortega Martínez (AMUEBLA Cluster), Lisa Besnard (France Clusters), Christian Altmann (Business Upper Austria), Lucia Seel (LSIC), Mirela Greți Puiu and Corina Kraus (RTxC), Irene Moser (Human Capital Management).*

The project's visibility within the cluster community continues to grow. Through consistent communication and outreach, the awareness and uptake of the project's outcomes have significantly increased. A strong example is the PENELOPE Gender Equality Training Handbook, which has been downloaded nearly 600 times in just 15 months – a clear indication of demand for practical guidance in the field.

The Linz meeting also provided an opportunity to deepen dialogue with regional stakeholders, notably through an exchange with the Human Capital Management network of Business Upper Austria. This facilitated valuable insights into the region's approach to parental leave and career development, particularly through the KOMPASS initiative, which was recently featured in one of the project's training videos in an interview with Irene Moser.

A further highlight came from Marlene Haudum, who presented the Upper Austrian Speakers' Platform – a dynamic, continuously updated database of women experts across sectors including business, science, media, environment, and sustainability. This initiative impressed the partners as a standout good practice with strong potential for replication across other European regions, supporting visibility and representation of women as speakers at diverse events.

## OUR NEXT ACTIONS

The handbook, the video toolkit, the E-Learning Platform, the workshop methodology: all are (mile)stones that that pave the road towards providing direct knowledge to clusters and SMEs. Given the importance of this action, we want to pilot the methodology and training materials we developed by organising workshops dedicated to SMEs and separately for cluster organisations. And get valuable feedback to finalise the materials available for free and for five years on our website:

- For SMEs: workshops will be organised in France, Spain, Romania and Austria.
- For clusters: workshops will be organised in the above countries plus they will allow European participation!



The first pilot workshop for SMEs will take place in Lyon, France:

📍 58 Rue Raulin 69007 Lyon.

📅 Thursday June 26, 2025.

🕒 From 2:30pm to 4:30pm, followed by a time of informal exchange over a sweet break to round off the day (in French).

✅ Free workshop, register [here](#).

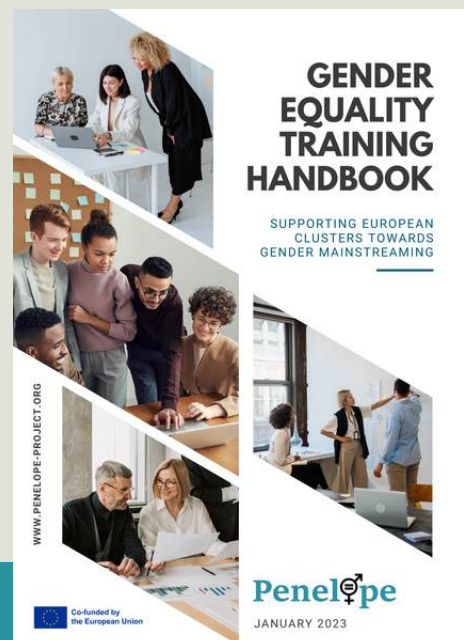
Are you a cluster organisation or an SME and are interested in taking part in our workshops? Drop us an email at [penelope@oxalis-scop.org](mailto:penelope@oxalis-scop.org) and we will get immediately back to you!

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING HANDBOOK FOR CLUSTER TEAMS

If you are not yet one of the almost 600 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.

This handbook, crafted to effectively address the needs of SMEs, aims to initiate the foundational steps in guiding clusters to develop methodologies and assist their member companies in aspects related to integrating a gender perspective.

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)





## WE PUT UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT OUR INTERVIEWEES!

As usual in our 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:



**BEATRIZ COLOMA  
RENTERO,**  
PEOPLE AND CSR MANAGER AT  
ECUS SLEEP

*“IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS BECAUSE IT HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT, RAISES EMPLOYEE MORALE, CONTRIBUTES TO HAVE MORE DIVERSE POINTS OF VIEW WHICH ULTIMATELY FAVORS DECISION MAKING, HELPS TO RETAIN THE BEST TALENT, FAVOURS THE WORK ENVIRONMENT, ENHANCES CORPORATE IMAGE, BUILDS CUSTOMER LOYALTY, INCREASES ECONOMIC BENEFITS, AND BOOSTS BRAND IMAGE. AND OF COURSE, “I BELIEVE THAT A GOOD WAY TO RAISE AWARENESS IS THROUGH THE PRESENTATION OF SUCCESS STORIES”.*

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



**ELENA JIANU,**  
OWNER OF ELTRA LOGIS,  
UNIVERSITY LECTURER  
AND ENTREPRENEUR

*“I THINK CLUSTER ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD GET INVOLVED IN A PERMANENT DIALOGUE WITH THEIR MEMBERS, IN NEGOTIATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT FOR PARLIAMENTARY INITIATIVES OF INTEREST IN THIS AREA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND WITH A WELL-ESTABLISHED AGENDA”. AND TO ENGAGE IN “COOPERATION WITH OTHER GENDER ORGANIZATIONS ON DOING SOMETHING CONCRETE RELATED TO THE CHANGE IN LEGISLATION AND THEN TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE CHANGE IN THE ORGANIZATIONS”.*

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



**MARIANNE  
SYTCHKOV,**  
DIRECTOR LEXI-L

*“IF WE WERE TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE, WE WOULD BE MOVING TOWARDS A SOCIETY THAT CREATES MORE VALUE, BECAUSE GENDER DIVERSITY ALWAYS PRODUCES MORE IDEAS AND MUCH MORE INTERACTION. SO COLLECTIVELY WE WOULD BE RICHER AND MORE INNOVATIVE IN EVERY FIELD”.*

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



**PAOLA LIGABUE  
& NADINE  
NEMBACH,**  
PRESIDENTS OF EWMD  
INTERNATIONAL BOARD

*“ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IS CRUCIAL FOR CREATING A JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY. TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY, COMPANIES, WOMEN’S NETWORKS, PUBLIC AUTHORITIES, AND GOVERNMENTS ALL HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS THE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS THAT PREVENT WOMEN FROM REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN ALL ASPECTS OF SOCIETY. ONLY BY WORKING TOGETHER AND TAKING CONCRETE ACTIONS CAN WE CREATE A WORLD WHERE GENDER EQUALITY IS TRULY REALIZED”.*

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