

# NEWSLETTER #2

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

## OUR PENELOPE HANDBOOK IS OUT!

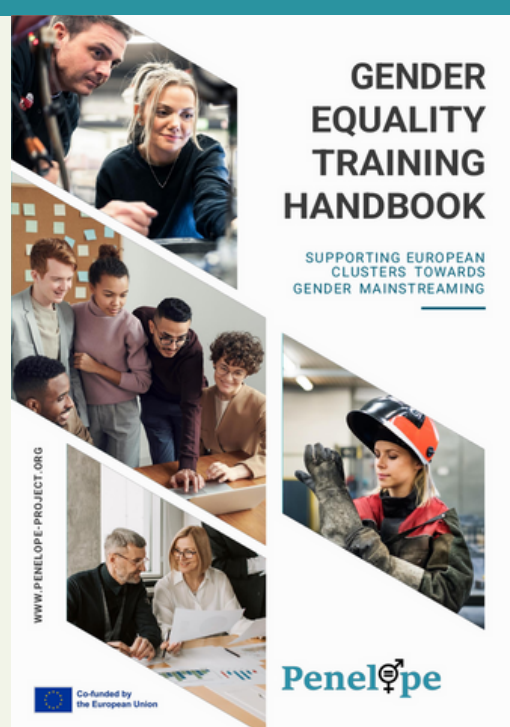
Over the past year, we focused our work on the handbook following these objectives:

- To identify good practices among EU clusters and policy makers at regional, national and EU level related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
- To define a pan-European Gender Mainstreaming Approach through specific tools for SMEs.

We were positively surprised to see the echo in the European cluster community when asked to contribute with their experience and knowledge to our collection of good practices.

We succeeded to double the number of good practices identified (from targeted 15 to 28) and the number of interviews (from 10 to 20) carried out with representatives of companies, clusters and cluster policy makers, with women networks.

All these contributions come from Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and Lithuania, as well as from European networks and associations and global institutions, making our upcoming handbook a first truly pan-European effort of its kind.



[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE HANDBOOK](http://www.penelope-project.org)

This input was analysed and combined with intensive research led to the design of 18 tools for a gender mainstreaming approach that were structured in eight areas of possible intervention:

1. **Workplace culture and institutional transformation.**
2. **Talent recruitment.**
3. **Career progression and access to training.**
4. **Equal pay.**
5. **Working conditions, health, and occupational safety.**
6. **Maternity, work-life balance, and flexible working arrangements.**
7. **Sexism and harassment in the workplace.**
8. **Gender monitoring, performance, and reporting.**

This toolkit, 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.

The subsequent project activities will delve deeper into this goal, presenting a comprehensive methodology tailored for EU clusters. This methodology will empower clusters to conduct their own training sessions on gender mainstreaming for their associated companies, thus demonstrating with the appropriate tools and support from cluster industries, they can embrace gender policies and foster equal opportunities within their workforce.



## THE 2ND PROJECT MEETING TOOK PLACE IN SPAIN IN SEPTEMBER 2023

Hosted by the AMUEBLA Cluster of Innovation for Furniture Manufacturers on 21-22 September 2023, the meeting's agenda included a review of the activities carried out since the last meeting in November 2022, taking stock of the results achieved and planning for the next period.

We are aware of the need expressed by clusters to see more and more practical impact of policies and initiatives that highlight and value the role of women within European clusters and their businesses and for tools that allow them to help and accompany their associated companies in the development of gender mainstreaming strategies.

Our goal for the first part of the project was therefore to work on the design of clear guidelines for clusters' staff towards gender mainstreaming, addressing topics such as gender equality and inclusion, gender impact assessment, gender communication or gender monitoring, thus promoting equality between women and men across the EU.

## OUR PENELOPE INTERVIEWS ARE LAUNCHED!

In autumn we launched 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 wanted to learn from various ecosystems 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.



**ELPI PETRAKI,**  
PRESIDENT OF WISTA  
INTERNATIONAL, THE  
WOMEN IN SHIPPING AND  
TRADE ASSOCIATION

*“REMOVING GENDER INEQUALITY IS NOT ABOUT WOMEN REPLACING MEN; IT’S ABOUT WORKING TOGETHER TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND ACKNOWLEDGING THAT WOMEN HAVE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY, MAKE DECISIONS AND ADDRESS INDUSTRY CHALLENGES”.*

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



**KAROLINA LIPINSKA,**  
INNOVATION ARCHITECT &  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR AT THE  
DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AT THE OFFICE  
OF THE MARSHAL OF THE  
POMORSKIE VOIVODESHIP

*“I BELIEVE THAT CLUSTERS AND SMART SPECIALIZATIONS ARE AREAS WITH THE GREATEST DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL TO ALLOW WOMEN TO SPREAD THEIR WINGS BECAUSE EACH NEW TALENT ON THE MARKET IS AN ADDED AND PRECIOUS VALUE”.*

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



**SYLVIE ARNAUD,**  
FORMER HR MANAGER AT  
OXALIS SCOP

*“IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO DESCRIBE THE ADDED VALUE OF A WOMAN IN POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT GOING INTO POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION. IT SEEMS TO ME, WHATEVER HER GENDER, THAT WE ALL HAVE ASSETS, DIFFERENT APPROACHES AND POSTURES ACCORDING TO HER LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL PATH. IT IS PRECISELY THE PLURALITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE GENDERS THAT CREATES WEALTH”.*

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



**ANA BELÉN  
BARQUEROS**  
HEAD OF THE WOMEN’S  
SECRETARIAT AT THE GENERAL  
UNION OF WORKERS REGION  
OF MURCIA

*“IF SMES TRY TO MAINTAIN THE TRADITIONAL BARRIERS, REJECTING GENDER EQUALITY OR DIVERSITY IN THE DIFFERENT JOBS, NOT ADMITTING THAT THEY MUST OFFER DECENT WAGES, OR THAT THE CO-RESPONSIBLE CONCILIATION OR FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS IS NOT ONLY A REQUIREMENT OF THE WORKER, BUT ALSO A WAY TO INCREASE THEIR PRODUCTIVITY, IN THIS CASE THEIR HIRING OPTIONS WILL BE DIFFICULT”.*

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

## OUR PRESENCE IN THE EUROPEAN CLUSTER COMMUNITY!

Knowing of the need to raise awareness in the cluster community about gender equality and gender mainstreaming as factors for a sustainable competitiveness, being in a permanent search for good practices and engagement of the interested actors, we are continuously searching for and taking every opportunity we find to make the PENELOPE project visible in our countries and at European level.



On **16 March 2023** at the webinar “**Professional equality in clusters/networks and the territories**”, organised by France Clusters to share good practices and information on new policy measures.

On **12 October 2023** during the “**Clusters Meet Regions**” event organised by the European Cluster Collaboration Platform in Lyon.

On **25 October 2023** at the **BeHealth – International Event in Healthcare** organised by the Romanian RoHealth Cluster, in the panel dedicated to Women Entrepreneurship.

On **30 November 2023** at the event “**Bercy Fait Son Industrie**” during the Industry Week in France, through an exhibition, organised by France Clusters, dedicated to “Women and Industrial Clusters/Networks” that was visited by the Minister of Industry.

We have also an active presence on the **European Cluster Collaboration Platform**.



For more information on the project, you can visit our project's website where we will inform the broad audience on our activities and achievements.



Follow us on LinkedIn at [PENELOPE-PROJECT](https://www.linkedin.com/company/penelope-project) and stay tuned for all our activities!



[www.penelope-project.org](http://www.penelope-project.org)



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