



**TRAINING MATERIALS  
FOR FACILITATORS  
ORGANIZING  
GENDER EQUALITY  
AWARENESS RAISING  
WORKSHOPS FOR SMES**



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The current materials can be used by trainers and facilitators who want to organize Gender Equality Awareness Raising Workshops for SMEs based on the PENELOPE E-Learning Platform.

The material follows the agenda suggested within the framework of the PENELOPE project for the organization of such a workshop and is a part of the *“Gender Mainstreaming Training: PENELOPE Guidelines and Resources”* that also provides the facilitator a *Training Guide for Organizing Gender Equality Awareness Raising Workshops for SMEs* and the documents necessary for the development of the workshop:

- Presentation slides (templates and a sample filled-in version).
- GDPR-compliant attendance list.
- Participant satisfaction survey.

We encourage you to tailor the presentations to suit your audience, sector, environment, or country. However, we kindly ask that you keep a minimum level of information about the PENELOPE project and the project consortium in your adapted version.

## WORKSHOP AGENDA

| Time |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | <b>I. GENERAL PRESENTATION</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcome notes</li> <li>2. Participants presentation</li> <li>3. European framework for gender equality</li> <li>4. What is PENELOPE project?</li> <li>5. What is Gender Equality and Why should it be on the SMEs' agenda?</li> </ol> |
|      | <b>II. PLATFORM DISCOVERY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to connect to the platform</li> <li>- Presentation of the mains parts of the platform</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    |
|      | <b>III. PRACTICAL PART</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workplace culture and institutional transformation</li> <li>- Group activity</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                    |
|      | <b>IV. CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## I. GENERAL PRESENTATION

### I.1. Introduction

*Welcome, why this workshop, agenda*

### I.2. Participants presentation

*What picture evokes something related to gender equality?*

Prepare a few images related to gender equality. If necessary, you can find them on open-resources pages like [Pexels](https://www.pexels.com/).

Ask the participants to choose the one that makes them think of any gender equality related issues, either it is gender inequality, stereotypes, biases, gender related issues in the professional environment or outside it, work-life balance, etc.

They can explain why they made their choice and briefly introduce themselves and the reason they are present at the workshop.

### I.3. European framework for gender equality

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** highlights gender equality as a fundamental goal (Goal 5), by recognizing that the empowerment of women and girls is crucial for the achievement of all other goals. At the same time, the **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025** envisions a Europe where men and women can thrive and lead without stereotypes.

Undeniably, women play an important role in EU countries' path towards a higher level of industrialization. However, industrial development is **not a gender-neutral** process, and it can lead to unequal opportunities if the strategies for the development and promotion of industrialization, technology and innovation do not take into account the gender dimension.

Although **SMEs play a key role in Europe's industrial landscape**, gender equality remains a challenge. The **EU Directive 2006/54/EC** encourages companies to **promote a systematic equal treatment** in employment, training, and career advancement, which can be effectively achieved through the **development and implementation of diverse gender mainstreaming strategies**.

Since clusters are one of the main drivers of the competitiveness of EU economy due to their deep impact on SMEs, **it is essential to equip cluster organizations' staff with the understanding**

of **core gender mainstreaming principles** that can be used to customize development interventions so that adverse gender impacts are mitigated, and current gender inequalities in the EU industry are addressed.

And this is where the **PENELOPE Project** comes into play.

## I.4. What is PENELOPE project?

### *Objectives and expected results of the PENELOPE project*

Goodwill and intentions are not enough to improve gender equality in the workplace. It is absolutely crucial to have the **relevant knowledge and effective, practical tools**. The PENELOPE project was thus created to **equip SMEs, clusters, and stakeholders with concrete solutions** to implement sustainable gender equality strategies.

**“PENELOPE - Innovative and pioneer cluster-based approach to foster and integrate gender mainstreaming strategies in European SMEs”** is a project developed under the Erasmus+ program by 5 partners from France, Austria, Romania and Spain

- OXALIS France –Project coordinator
- AMUEBLA Cluster – Spain
- France Clusters – France
- Lucia Seel International Consulting GmbH – Austria
- Romanian Textile Concept Cluster – Romania

PENELOPE aims, first, to develop **innovative tools for gender mainstreaming strategies** in SMEs, then rely on clusters in different sectors to ensure the transfer and implementation of these tools within SMEs.

The results developed by the PENELOPE project are:

- A pioneering and innovative [training handbook](#) containing **best practices** from EU clusters and policy makers, **interviews** with key-industry representatives and a **guidebook of tools** or implementing gender mainstreaming in SMEs.
- A set of [video pills](#) as useful resources on gender mainstreaming and on how companies can increase and keep female participation in the labor market.
- An [e-learning platform](#), free of charge for five years, offering adaptive trainings for both clusters and SMEs.

- A **training methodology** for the clusters that want to train their members to use the tools provided by the project.

## I.5. What is gender equality and why should it be on the SMEs' agenda?

### *Notions of equality - What is gender equality? What is gender equality at work?*

Equal rights for women and men are one of the fundamental goals of the European Union, which was created on the principle of equality. The European Union has adopted the strategy of incorporating this subject into all its policies in order to promote equality between men and women.

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 delivers on the von der Leyen Commission's commitment to achieving a Union of Equality. The Strategy presents policy objectives and actions to make considerable progress by 2025 towards a **gender-equal Europe**. The goal is a Union where women and men, girls, and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society<sup>1</sup>.

A very clear definition can be found in UNICEF's Glossary of Terms and Concepts<sup>2</sup>:

"The concept that women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in the home, community and society.

Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men and girls and boys are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups and that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles. Gender equality is a matter of human rights and is considered a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Genderglossarytermsandconcepts.pdf>

When we talk about equality between men and women at work, the first thing that comes to mind is **equal pay**.

**But it also concerns other topics** that receive less attention, but where inequalities between men and women also exist, like hiring, training, career development, working conditions, health and safety at work, work-life balance.

### *Why gender inequality is a social construction?*

A **social construct** refers to an idea or category that is created and maintained by society rather than being an inherent or natural truth. Social constructs shape our understanding of the world and influence behaviors, norms, and institutions.

**Gender** is a prime example of a **social construct** because it defines the characteristics, roles, and expectations of women, men, girls, and boys based on societal norms rather than biological differences.

Unlike **sex**, which refers to biological and physiological traits such as chromosomes and reproductive organs, **gender is fluid and varies across cultures, historical periods, and social contexts**. This means that what it means to be a "man" or a "woman" is not universal, but is shaped by cultural traditions, laws, media representations, and socialization processes.

Because gender is hierarchical, it produces **systemic inequalities** that disproportionately affect women and marginalized gender identities. These inequalities are deeply ingrained in **social, political, and economic structures**, leading to **gender-based discrimination** that intersects with other forms of inequality, such as ethnicity, class, disability, and age—a concept known as **intersectionality**.

The persistence of gender inequality is reinforced by a **hetero-patriarchal binary system**, which assigns **specific roles and attributes** to men and women, positioning men as dominant in the public and professional spheres while limiting women's roles to caregiving and domestic responsibilities.

This division is further entrenched in **economic models**, particularly capitalism, where productive work—typically performed by men—is financially and socially recognized, while reproductive and care work—largely performed by women—remains **invisible, unpaid, and unprotected** by labor rights.

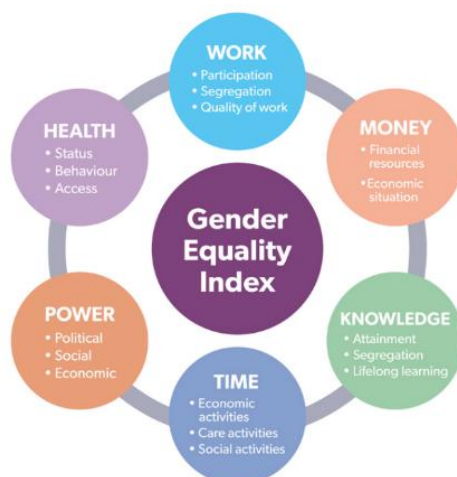
Understanding gender inequality as a **socially constructed and structural issue** rather than an individual or biological problem is crucial for dismantling discrimination. Since social constructs are created by societies, they can also be **challenged and changed** through policies, education, and cultural shifts. **Achieving gender equality requires addressing the deep-rooted norms and power structures** that sustain these inequalities and recognizing the value of all forms of work,

particularly the unpaid and undervalued labor that disproportionately falls on women. Only by transforming the way gender is perceived and institutionalized can we create a **more equitable and inclusive society**.

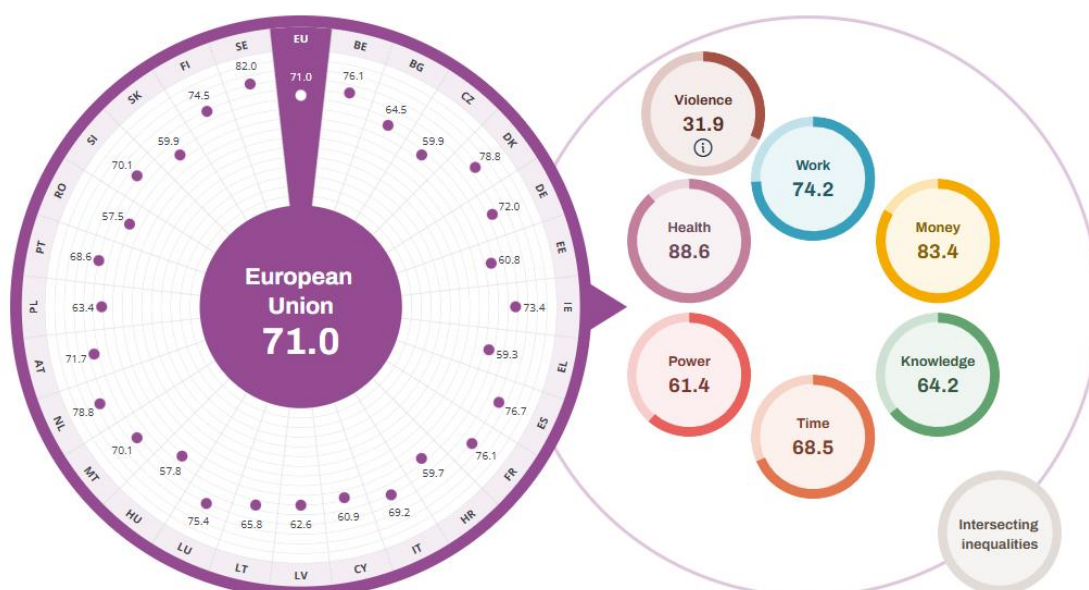
### *The current extent of professional inequality*

(Observation: the following data is presented at European level. You can check the Index for your own country on the [EIGE](#) website and adapt your presentation accordingly).

Gender inequality is measured in the six domains shown below.



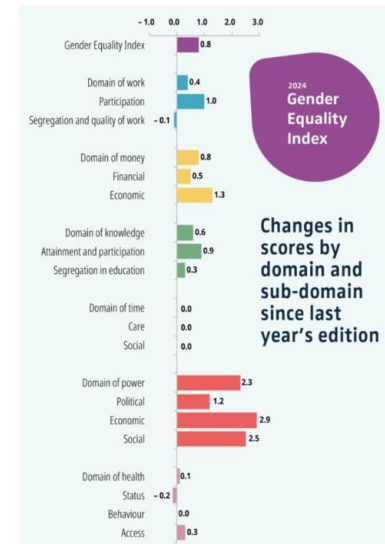
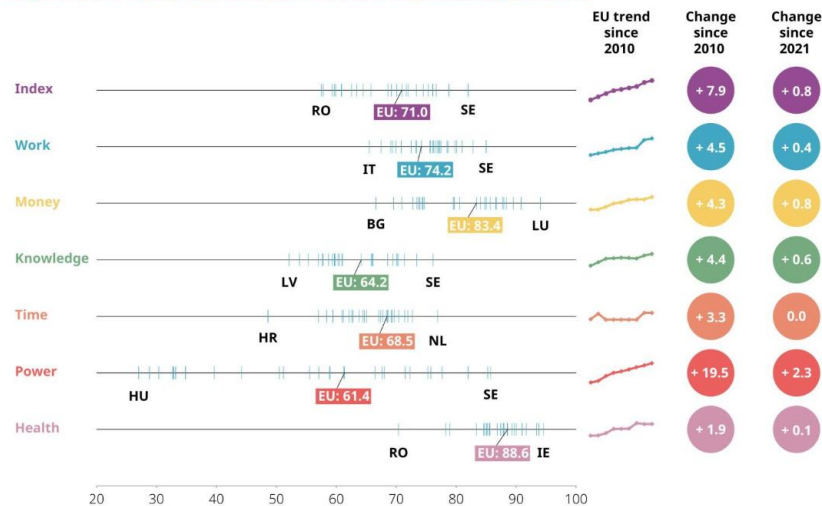
The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has been analyzing them in their yearly Gender Equality Index. In the **Gender Equality Index 2024: Sustaining momentum on a fragile path**, the situation overall in Europe looks like this:





The data for **2024 Index** is mostly from **2022**. The Gender Equality Index gives the EU and the Member States a **score from 1 to 100**. A score of 100 would mean that a country had reached full equality between women and men.

Ranges of Gender Equality Index 2024 scores for Member States and changes over time



## Gender Equality Index 2024 highlights

The Gender Equality Index score for the EU is 71 out of 100 points. This marks a 0.8-point improvement on the 2023 Index score and an improvement of 7.9 points in total since 2010. Although the domain of power has the lowest domain score, it sets the pace for change, as its 2.3-point jump between 2023 and 2024 accounts for 60 % of the overall progress in the 2024 Index.

- **Domain of work:** measures the extent to which women and men can benefit from equal access to employment and good working conditions – **progress has stagnated**

Although the gender employment gap has slightly narrowed, this has been counterbalanced by high gender disparities in sectoral segregation, as fear of workplace harassment can deter women from entering certain men-dominated sectors (e.g. construction or transport), reinforcing occupational segregation and the gender pay gap.

- **Domain of money:** measures gender inequalities in access to financial resources and women's and men's economic situation – **a slight improvement, but there are widening gender gaps among the highly educated and those with greater care responsibilities** (namely in couples with children, among 50- to 64-year-olds). These gaps reflect the negative effects on income of the skewed and often lifelong uptake of unpaid care responsibilities and occupational gender segregation.

- **Domain of knowledge:** measures gender inequalities in educational attainment, participation in education and training over the life course and gender segregation – **progress has been steady but slow, hindered by entrenched segregation in education.** This progress has been driven solely by higher numbers of women and men graduating from universities and participating in lifelong learning (where the numbers are slightly in favor of women). However, entrenched segregation in education continues to bar more substantial progress in this domain.
- **Domain of time:** measures gender inequalities in allocation of time spent doing care and domestic work and social activities – **an unequal division of care and housework tasks prevails.** Time remains one of the lowest-scoring domains. The unequal distribution of (unpaid) care, cooking and housework activities between women and men dictates the low score of the domain.
- **Domain of power:** measures gender equality in decision-making positions across the political, economic and social spheres – **the presence of women in power has increased, but women are still under-represented.** Women remain under-represented in positions of power and decision-making across the EU, despite the domain of power seeing the most dynamic improvement in the Index.

EU parliamentary elections in 2024 saw a fall in women's representation, reversing a previous continuous upward trend for the first time. In the new European Parliament, women account for 39 % of Members of the European Parliament, slightly lower than before. The EU average for women in national parliaments is 33 %, with women often also under-represented at the local level. However, the share of women on the boards of the largest listed companies in the Member States is now at an all-time high of 33 %, mostly due to binding quotas.

- **Domain of health:** measures gender equality in three health-related aspects: health status, health behavior and access to health services – **progress has been slowest across all domains, mainly due to poorer health status.** Across the EU, the health status of both women and men is deteriorating and, although women live longer than men, they have poorer health.

So, although sometimes it is said that equality has been achieved, that women and men are now equal, the figures categorically contradict this assertion. Progress is being made, but it is often slow and not always very significant. In some cases, we are even seeing regressions that we need to pay attention to. There are various points that have to be taken into account for each domain of inequality, and here are some aspects we should keep in mind when talking about **the gender inequalities in the professional life:**

## Wage disparities

The gender pay gap is the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of working men and women.

The principle of “equal pay for equal work or work of equal value” has been a legal requirement in the EU since 1958, but women are still frequently paid less than men for performing the same task.

Here is an evolution of the gender pay gap at EU level for the last years. This means that, on average, women on average earn 0.87€ for every 1€ earned by men. Women would need to work 1.5 extra months to make up the difference.

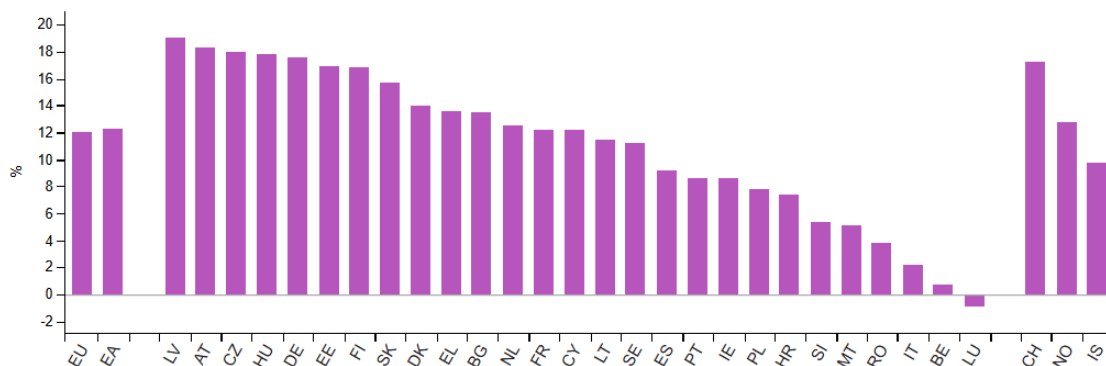
According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2023, at the current rate of progress, it will take 131 years to reach full parity.

| TIME                                      | 18   | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023     |
|-------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|
| GEO                                       |      |      |      |      |      |          |
| EU27_2020                                 |      |      |      |      |      |          |
| European Union - 27 countries (from 2020) | 14.4 | 13.7 | 12.7 | 12.3 | 12.2 | 12.0 (p) |

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/SDG\\_05\\_20/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=6f069419-fcb7-47a2-bdda-c22acca36a0e](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/SDG_05_20/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=6f069419-fcb7-47a2-bdda-c22acca36a0e)

In 2023, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 12.0% below those of men in the EU, the highest gender pay gap in the EU being recorded in Latvia (19.0%) and the lowest in Luxembourg (-0.9%).

*The unadjusted gender pay gap, 2023 (difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings)*



[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics)

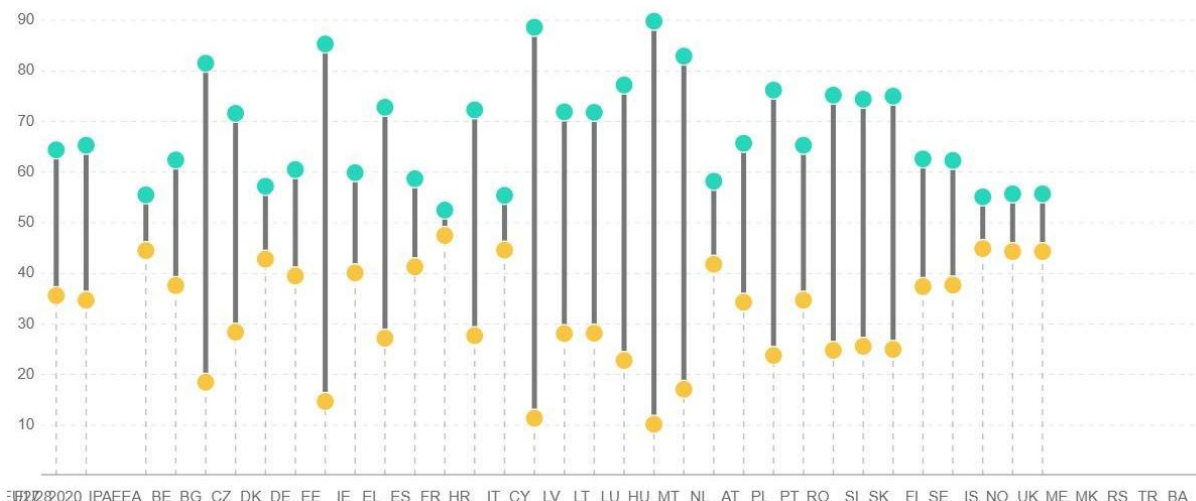
The pay gap has a long-term impact on the quality of women's life, on their risk of exposure to poverty and on the persisting pension pay gap, which is at around 30% in the EU.

### Lack of representation in leadership / Glass ceiling

Women are consistently barred from leadership positions by being passed over for promotions and development opportunities, but data shows that business benefits from having female executives.

While very few women occupy leadership roles and management positions, the numbers are marginally improving (although it may be due to the required quota) – at an all-time high of 33% as shown in the domain of power indicator.

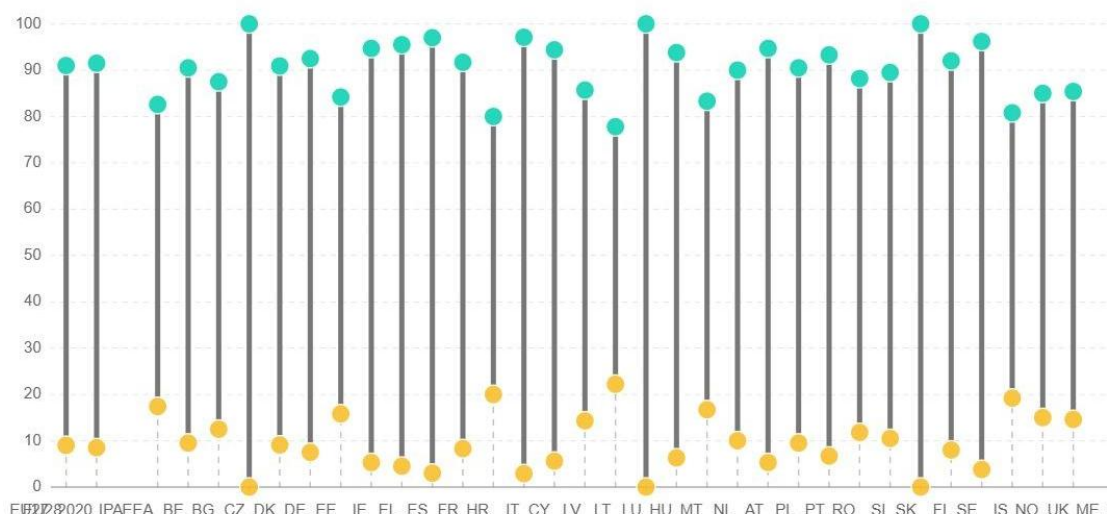
EIGE statistics - Largest listed companies: presidents, board members and employee representatives – [members chart](#)



However, at the top-level management there are barely 7-8% women leaders in the Fortune 500 companies. Although this has happened for the first time in the list's 68-year history, men still made up 83% of the 533 executive officers within the corporations listed in the S&P 100.

Also, managers had the biggest gender pay gaps in the EU, with women earning 23% less than males in their occupation.

Largest listed companies: CEOs, executives and non-executives – [CEO chart](#)



### Sectoral segregation:

The so-called "horizontal gender segregation," in which males predominate in highly compensated industries like ICT and women are concentrated in low-paying fields like care, health, and education jobs, is a major contributor to the gender inequalities. The overrepresentation of women in these fields accounts for about 24% of the gender pay gap, as highly feminized jobs frequently suffer from systemic undervaluation.

### Unfair distribution of paid and unpaid work:

The OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) argues that gender inequality in unpaid care work is the missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labor outcomes, such as labor force participation, wages, and job quality. In 2022, a briefing document by the European Parliament stated that, as most unpaid care work within households is carried out by women, the 'unpaid care penalty' for women in the EU, which is equivalent to the earnings they lost because of this unbalanced distribution of care responsibilities, is estimated to reach €242 billion per year.

### Gender stereotype

A gender stereotype is a generalized assumption about a person's characteristics that reinforces sexism. One example of gender stereotypes in the workplace is how qualities like intelligence and agency are assigned to men versus women. Gender stereotypes often reframe these characteristics to portray women as "bossy", whereas in men they are considered good leadership qualities. Even seemingly innocuous gender stereotypes, such as the assumption that women are more nurturing, can undermine their contributions in the workplace.

Gender stereotypes disadvantage women's input before it can even be shared. Because of the common unconscious bias that assumes women are more emotional (and, therefore, less rational) than men, a female employee's idea might be overlooked in favor of one raised by her male counterpart. Or a man might share the same idea that a woman shares at work and end up getting credit for it because he has been seen as more of a leader.

### **Sexual harassment**

Female workers faced with sexual harassment have to navigate yet another obstacle to gender equality in their career path, as this may be a big factor in deciding against getting a job in a certain (more segregated) domain. The latest international movements and changes in the public opinion made sexual harassment in work environments more likely to be reported – and victims more likely to be believed.

Gender inequality in the workplace takes many forms – unequal pay, disparity in promotions, incidents of sexual harassment, discrimination, etc. and has many causes, one of the most important being the inherent belief that exists in most societies, that men are simply better equipped to handle certain jobs, which leads to the division of jobs. Most of the times, those are the jobs that pay the best and this discrimination results in lower income for women.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of the gender pay gap in the EU is still unexplained and cannot be connected to worker or workplace factors like education, occupation, working hours, or the type of economic activity a person is employed in.

Some final data to leave you with:

- The gender pay gap is at 12% at EU level and 20% worldwide - ILO, 2022.
- 10% of the world's Heads of State today are women - UN Women, 2024.
- Today women enjoy less than two-thirds of the legal rights available to men—not three-quarters as previously estimated - World Bank, 2024.

### *The consequences and benefits of reducing inequality for individuals, companies and society*

Gender discrimination within the workplace hinders personal success as well as company success. Below are just some of its **negative impacts**.

### **Economic drawbacks**

Because women are often overlooked for promotions, they are also stuck with lower compensation. As a result, female employees might be more likely to change jobs or industries or leave the labor force entirely.

This undervaluation also impacts company success. When female employees' contributions are not recognized, organizations miss out on ideas, projects, and sales that could have positioned them as industry leaders

### **Stunted innovation**

Diverse perspectives drive innovation. So, when women are excluded from key decision-making, research and development (R&D) can stagnate.

Fostering gender diversity, equity, and inclusion results in increased employee engagement and better employee retention. When companies fully invest in their employees, they can spend less time hiring and training and more time innovating.

### **Mental health implications**

Sexism is also a mental health issue, threatening female employees' well-being. Working as hard as their male counterparts without receiving the same recognition is draining. Discrimination and sexual harassment can quickly lead to burnout and a decline in productivity.

Burnout from discrimination contributes to why women prefer to work remotely. After the pandemic, many women of color were especially hesitant to return to the office because of their experiences of isolation and discrimination there.

By **implementing gender mainstreaming** into their policies, organizations can take meaningful steps toward bridging the gender promotion gap, creating workplaces that are more equitable, inclusive, and favorable to the success of all employees. All these will have a positive impact on the organization, which can be seen in the following aspects:

#### **1. Enhanced organizational performance**

- Diverse leadership teams bring a variety of perspectives, experiences, and problem-solving approaches.
- This diversity fosters innovation, creativity, and adaptability, essential qualities in today's rapidly changing business landscape.

#### **2. Broader talent pool and skills diversity**

- By actively promoting gender equality in professional advancement, organizations can tap into a broader range of skills and competencies.

#### **3. Employee engagement and satisfaction**

- Employees, regardless of gender, are more likely to be engaged and satisfied in an environment that values their contributions and provides equal opportunities for growth.



- This positive workplace culture of inclusivity and fairness contributes to improving well-being and health at work, which leads to a more motivated workforce and to higher retention rates.

#### 4. Corporate social responsibility and reputation

- Companies that champion gender equality in professional advancement are perceived as ethical, progressive, and socially responsible, which positively impacts their reputation.
- This can lead to increased brand loyalty and attract top talent seeking inclusive work environments.

#### 5. Legal and ethical imperatives

- Addressing the gender promotion gap is not only ethically responsible but also aligns with legal requirements, mitigating the risk of legal challenges and ensuring compliance with evolving societal expectations.

#### 6. Positive economic impact

- Closing the gender promotion gap has positive economic implications on both micro and macro levels.
- At the organizational level, it contributes to increased productivity and profitability.
- At the societal level, it helps maximize the economic potential of all citizens, contributing to overall economic growth and development.

*Why is it important for companies to have a strategy about gender equality and what is gender mainstreaming*

**Gender mainstreaming** has been embraced internationally as a **strategy towards achieving gender equality**. In order to promote gender equality and combat discrimination, it entails integrating a gender perspective into the planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of policies, projects, products, and/or services.

The goal of gender mainstreaming goes beyond merely preventing the creation or perpetuation of inequalities, which can negatively impact both men and women. It also entails analyzing the current state of affairs to pinpoint inequalities and creating policies (both in the public sphere at the level of local, regional, national, and European institutions, as well as in the private sphere of organizations and companies) meant to address those imbalances and reverse the processes that created them.

Gender mainstreaming requires a contextual analysis of the needs, interests, roles and experiences of women and men, as well as the integration of specific actions to address any gender-based inequalities that may have emerged from this analysis.



We have seen before what integrating a gender perspective into the policies of a company can do, and we can highlight some indisputable and measurable advantages again:

- **Corporate attractiveness:** Companies that implement gender equality increase their attractiveness to both men and women.
- **Performance:** Equality between women and men and the fact of not eliminating women or enabling their professional development are performance factors for companies. For example, it is easier to attract the skills one is looking for, since the spectrum is broader. Several studies have clearly shown that performance does not suffer from effective equality.
- **Well-being at work:** Statistics have shown that when employees are asked to rate themselves on a scale measuring their well-being at work, their score is higher in companies that take this issue into account.
- **Enhancing Competitiveness:** optimizing resources such as talent, technology, and capital, businesses can achieve cost-effective operations and improved efficiency. Research shows that companies with more women in leadership benefit from greater innovation, healthier cultures, and stronger performance.' [McKinsey Report 2024]

Nevertheless, many organizations (specially SMEs) within the EU have not yet actively adopted a systematic policy of mainstreaming gender equality, despite a clear commitment to equality between men and women as a shared goal.

Institutional transformation refers to a significant shift within an institution that has an impact on its surrounding environment as a result. It includes adjustments to the fundamental principles and viewpoints that govern a particular institution as well as adjustments to the internal regulations and procedures.

Organizations are not gender-neutral entities, and gender concerns within one are sometimes overt and sometimes hidden. The presence of women and men at every level of an organization's hierarchy is merely one (visible) sign that organizations are biased toward one gender over the other. It is necessary to induce organizational change processes to fit the specific organizational culture.

To mainstream gender equality, an organization's entire personnel must be committed. Establishing equality between men and women as a collective value, a standard mindset, and a joint responsibility for both management and employees assists in harmonizing an organization's entire scope of operations with the objective of achieving gender equality. Both leaders and employees must include equality between men and women within their individual spheres of responsibility as part of gender mainstreaming.

Once you are committed to implement the gender perspective into your company's activity, it is necessary to do it in a formalized way, to clearly specify your goals, the steps to be taken, the rules imposed, the allocation of responsibilities and penalties in case of offences, and this can be done through **developing a gender equality strategy and implementation plan**.

And we will go a bit further into this topic a bit later, when we present the tools you can use for this endeavor.

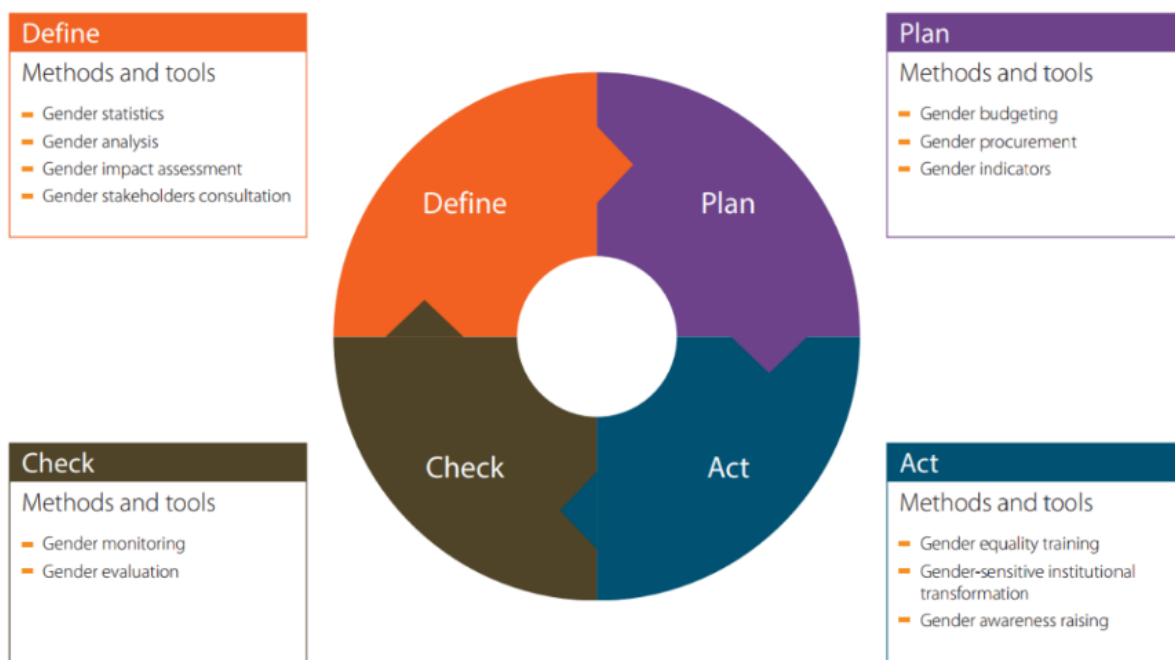
### *Actions to be taken and existing tools (e.g. the platform)*

**Integrating the gender perspective** in a policy means that equality between women and men, as the overarching principle, should be taken into consideration in all decisions, in each phase of the policy-making process, by all the actors involved.

The policy process is understood as **a multi-stage cycle**, including defining, planning, implementing and checking (monitoring and evaluating). In many cases, these stages are turned into a cycle, with each step being repeated as changes occur. For example, when a policy is evaluated, it may reveal new problems that need to be addressed for re-programming.

On the EIGE webpage you can find a chart that refers to the specific stages of the cycle of gender mainstreaming and the necessary elements that need to be given attention within each stage. Specific gender mainstreaming methods and tools that should be used within each of the cycle stages are also included.

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>



The **PENELOPE Project** offers you the following tools you can use for developing a gender equality strategy and integrating the gender perspective in your activities:

- The PENELOPE [GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING HANDBOOK](#) - SUPPORTING EUROPEAN CLUSTERS TOWARDS GENDER MAINSTREAMING, with good practices, interviews and tools related to gender mainstreaming.
- A [Video Toolkit](#) designed to equip organizations with practical tools and insights to promote gender equality in the workplace.
- The [Virtual Learning Environment](#), where you will find a training designed specifically for SMEs, in order to help them build a gender-inclusive company culture and to develop internal strategies to solve potential gender inequities in the workplace, contributing to the basis of broad-based, long-term, and substantial reforms within European SMEs landscape, where you can learn, amongst other things, how to conduct a gender audit, how to develop a gender equality strategy, a gender inclusive budget, a gender equality monitoring plan, how to integrate the gender perspective in the talent recruitment and in the overall work environment.

## II. PLATFORM DISCOVERY

### II.1. How to connect to the platform

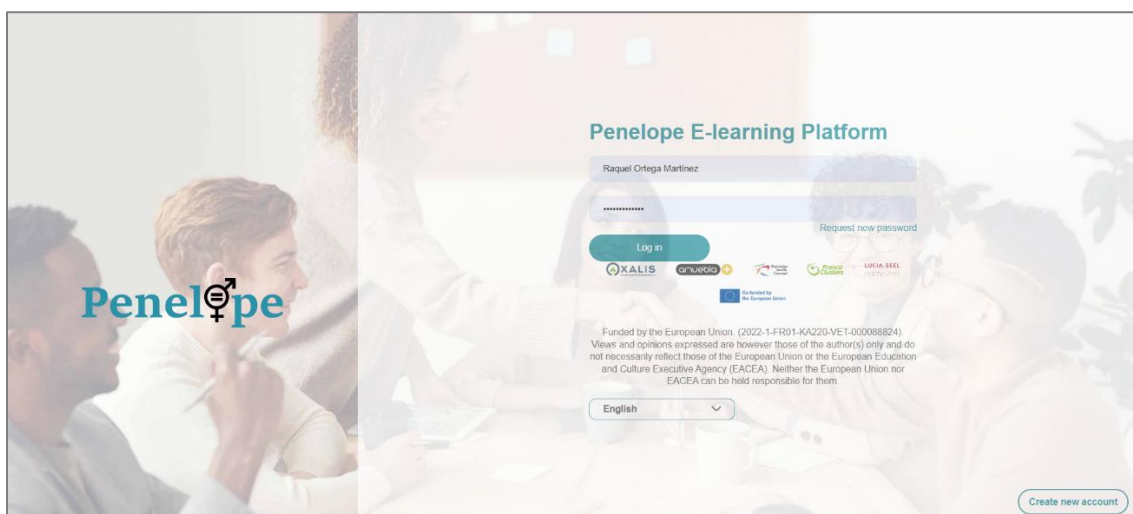
So, let us connect to this VLE and take a look at it!

*The instructions will probably differ depending on the type of workshop, if the participants will connect by scanning the QR code on their phone or will use the link to connect on a computer.*

### II.2. The mains parts of the platform

The Virtual Learning Environment comes with a USER GUIDE that will provide any information necessary for navigating and using the platform.

The first step will be, of course, creating an account and registering on the platform.



You will need to introduce your entire name and surname and do it correctly, because they will appear on the certificate that you will obtain in case you take all the training courses and activities.

After logging in, you will access the “Home” screen, where these PENELOPE virtual learning environment guidelines are available for download on the left of the page. In addition, there is a short introduction to the course, with a video that explains the whole PENELOPE training course.



DOWNLOAD THE USER GUIDE FOR THE  
PENELOPE E-LEARNING PLATFORM HERE.

[Download here](#) (2.86 MB)



RACHEL GREEN

Estudiante

Tendencias

Últimos 7 días

Formación(es) completada(s)

0/0

Formación(es) actual(es)

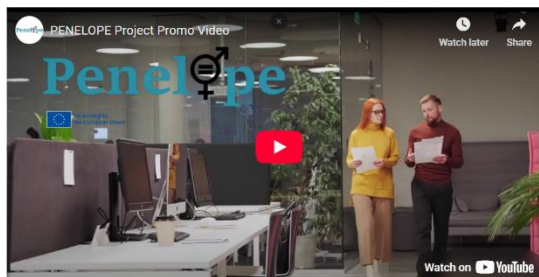
0/0

Certificado(s) recibido(s)

0/0

Tiempo dedicado a la formación

0/0



WELCOME TO THE PENELOPE E-LEARNING PLATFORM!

The PENELOPE project is an EU-funded initiative aimed at developing and implementing innovative gender mainstreaming strategies within European SMEs. By adopting a cluster-based methodological approach, PENELOPE seeks to cultivate gender-inclusive cultures, enhance online collaboration, and provide blended learning opportunities among industry clusters and their SMEs.

The project offers resources such as a [Gender Mainstreaming Handbook](#) and a [Video Toolkit](#), both designed to equip organizations with practical tools and insights to promote gender equality in the workplace.

The PENELOPE partnership comprises a cooperative of entrepreneurs and cluster practitioners from France, Spain, Austria, and Romania, all with extensive experience in implementing gender equality practices across various sectors.

- TO ACCESS THE TRAINING FOR CLUSTERS, [CLICK HERE](#).
- TO ACCESS THE TRAINING FOR SMEs, [CLICK HERE](#).

#### COMENTARIOS RECIENTES

No hay comentarios disponibles.

#### ÚLTIMOS CURSOS ACTIVOS

Gender Mainstreaming Training for Clusters

4%

Gender Mainstreaming Training for SMEs

18%



Funded by the European Union. (2022-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000088824). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

In order to access the different training paths, you need to click on the “Training” icon in the top menu.

You will see the two training paths, one for clusters and one for SMEs.

## Training catalogue

A to Z

**Visibility**

My trainings

**Categories**

Evaluation

Learning

**Duration**

0.5 hours

17 hours

2.5 hours

**Penelope Gender Mainstreaming for clusters**

Gender Mainstreaming Training for Clusters

0%

Start

**Penelope Gender Mainstreaming for SMEs**

Gender Mainstreaming Training for SMEs

Learn more

The next steps will be to choose one, enroll and join the training!

**The learning path** consists of PDF presentations, videos, and practical exercises. To progress through the training content, simply click the "Next" button. This will take you to the next activity, and the platform will automatically register your completion of the current activity.

### 1. WORK CULTURE & INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

GENDER MAINSTREAMING TRAINING FOR SMEs

INTRODUCTION 0/1 activities done

1. WORK CULTURE & INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Module 1 Training

Interview: The Journey of an SME Towards Gender Equality

Video: Deal with Resistance to Change

Video: Gender Budgeting in SMEs

Module 1 Test 1.1

Module 1 Test 1.2

Module 1 Test 1.3

Module 1 Test 1.4

Module 1 Test 1.5

Module 1 Exercise

2. TALENT RECRUITMENT 0/11 activities done

3. CAREER PROGRESSION & TRAINING 0/3 activities done

4. EQUAL PAY 0/4 activities done

Global Training Progress 0%

1. WORK CULTURE & INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Penelope MODULE 1

WORKPLACE CULTURE & INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Co-funded by the European Union

INTRODUCTION

Equal rights for women and men are one of the fundamental goals of the European Union. However, many organizations (especially SMEs) within the EU have not yet achieved this goal.

Nevertheless, many organizations (especially SMEs) within the EU have not yet achieved this goal.

Back Next



You can watch videos directly in the VLE, without the necessity to go to YouTube. Once finalized, you need to follow the same steps as previously, clicking on the "Next" button to access the next video or activity.

**Important:** If you do not click the "Next" button in each activity, it will remain marked as "Pending" in the progress status. Make sure to go through all activities and learning materials by clicking "Next" to ensure they are completed.

## 1. WORK CULTURE & INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Each training module contains different type of activities:

- Multiple choice test.
- True or false test.
- Drag the word.
- Find the word

You can access any of the training modules included in the learning path, but you will only obtain the certificate for your chosen learning path if you pass all the gamification activities in each course. You need at least 60% correct answers to pass each activity and you have up to four tries per activity, but you can "Redo" the training activities until you earn the PENELOPE course certificate.

You can keep track of your progress on the home page in the "Latest Activity" section, where the global progress percentage is displayed. Clicking on it will take you directly to the training module section.





DOWNLOAD THE USER GUIDE FOR THE PENELOPE E-LEARNING PLATFORM HERE.



WELCOME TO THE PENELOPE E-LEARNING PLATFORM!

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- TO ACCESS THE TRAINING FOR CLUSTERS, [CLICK HERE](#).
- TO ACCESS THE TRAINING FOR SMES, [CLICK HERE](#).



Student

Training(s) completed -- -->

Current training(s) -- -->

Certificate(s) received -- -->

Time spent on Training -- -->

RECENT COMMENTS

No comments available.

LATEST ACTIVE TRAININGS

| Training                                   | Progress |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| Gender Mainstreaming Training for Clusters | 4%       |
| Gender Mainstreaming Training for SMEs     | 15%      |

You can check the global training progress of a specific module in the “Training” and “See Progress” sections.

## Training catalogue

**Visibility**

My trainings

**Categories**

Evaluation

Learning

**Duration**

0.5 hours

17 hours

2.5 hours



**Penelope Gender Mainstreaming for clusters**

Gender Mainstreaming Training for Clusters ...

5%

Continue training



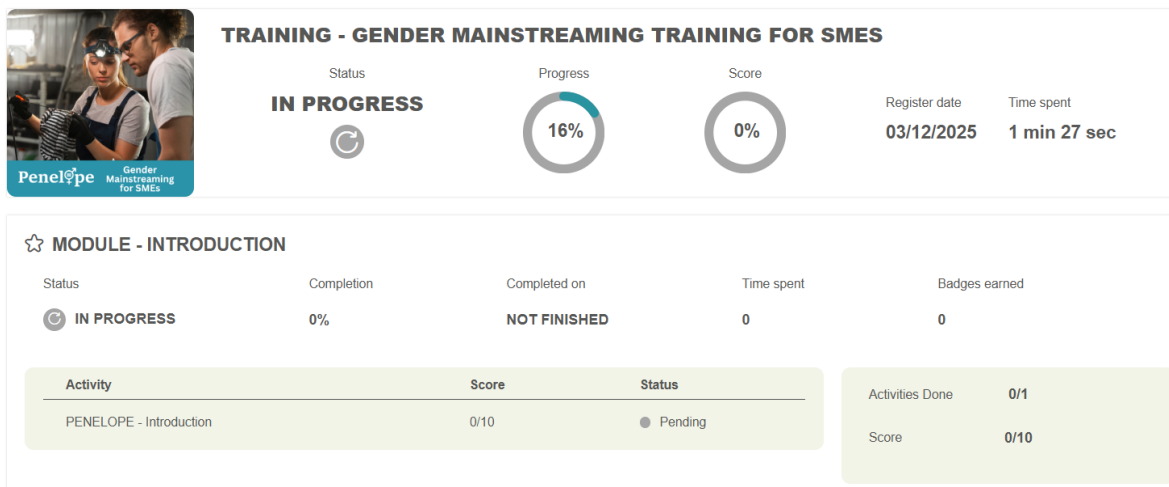
**Penelope Gender Mainstreaming for SMEs**

Gender Mainstreaming Training for SMEs ...

16%

Continue training

## My training progress



The VLE is very intuitive and user friendly and the used guide answers all the possible questions you may have.

### III. PRACTICAL PART

#### III.1. Workplace culture and institutional transformation

Now let us go a bit into details about the training path for **SMEs**!

This training program is designed to help SMEs **foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace** by **integrating gender equality strategies** into their operations. By addressing key areas such as recruitment, career progression, and workplace culture, SMEs can not only **meet legal and ethical obligations**, but also **enhance innovation, employee satisfaction, and overall business performance**.

A diverse and inclusive workforce leads to improved decision-making, increased creativity, and a stronger reputation in the market. This **training** equips SMEs with **practical tools** and **actionable strategies** to implement gender-inclusive policies, ensuring long-term sustainability and growth in a competitive business environment.

The training course for SMEs contains the following modules:

|                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Introduction</b>                                            | Introduction to basic gender mainstreaming in SMEs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>1. Workplace Culture &amp; Institutional Transformation</b> | <p>Tool #1 - Perform a gender audit of the status quo in your organization</p> <p>Tool #2 - Establish a gender equality strategy to foster institutional transformation</p> <p>Tool #3 - Deal with resistance to change and opposition to gender equality</p> <p>Tool #4 - Set goals to improve the level of gender inclusion of your workforce</p> |
| <b>2. Talent Recruitment</b>                                   | <p>Tool 5: Building an inclusive talent brand.</p> <p>Tool 6: Improve recruiting procedures and eliminate potential bias</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3. Career Progression &amp; Access to Training</b>                      | <p>Tool 7: Bridge the gender promotion gap</p> <p>Tool 8: Invest in skills and training through a gender lens</p>                                                                |
| <b>4. Equal Pay</b>                                                        | <p>Tool 9: Conduct an equal pay audit and analyze potential gender pay gaps</p> <p>Tool 10: Promote and ensure equal remuneration</p>                                            |
| <b>5. Working Conditions, Health, and Occupational Safety</b>              | <p>Tool 11: Integrate the gender perspective in the prevention of occupational risk</p> <p>Tool 12: Support your employees during menstruation and menopause</p>                 |
| <b>6. Maternity, Work-Life Balance &amp; Flexible Working Arrangements</b> | <p>Tool 13: Protect maternity and support expecting and new mothers in the workplace</p> <p>Tool 14: Build a flexibility strategy for a hybrid and high-performing workplace</p> |
| <b>7. Sexism and Harassment in the Workplace</b>                           | <p>Tool 15: Understand sexism to prevent gender-based harassment in the workplace</p> <p>Tool 16: Set in place a sexual harassment policy in your organisation</p>               |
| <b>8. Gender Monitoring, Performance &amp; Reporting</b>                   | <p>Tool 17: Create a monitoring and evaluation strategy</p> <p>Tool 18: Draft an evaluation report.</p>                                                                          |

All these tools are specifically designed to help you with your gender mainstreaming endeavors and to implement a gender equality strategy and implementation and evaluation plan, about which you can learn more in the **Module 1** of the training, called **Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation**

Any actions you have in mind to enhance gender diversity are built on the gender equality strategy. It offers the framework for pledges, initiatives, and progress monitoring related to equality between men and women.

The strategy should **specify goals, define activities, and allocate responsibilities**. It ought to lay out specific objectives, deadlines, and a plan for getting there. The results of the gender audit should serve as the foundation and support the business case by outlining a specific plan of action that will assist the organization in addressing flaws found.

Organizations can transcend sporadic and often unsuccessful methods for achieving gender equality by adopting a **comprehensive strategy that ensures the proper allocation of funds and resources** for gender equality initiatives while enabling seamless collaboration across all structures of the organization toward shared goals. A collective understanding of this strategy **facilitates cohesive efforts and fosters commitment**. Lacking a strategy makes it very challenging to assess if daily actions and decisions are effectively steering the organization toward its desired ultimate objective.

As explained by the Australian Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency, a gender equality strategy:

- Outlines a gender equality vision for an organization
- Connects to the business or organizational strategy.
- Identifies practical goals.
- Includes measurable objectives linked to goals.
- Encourages active and inclusive leadership.
- Is simple to communicate.
- Holds an organization accountable for its progress on equality between men and women.
- Follows a transparent governance process.
- Goes beyond equality between men and women to consider other elements of inclusion.
- Is integrated with all divisions and organizational levels.

In the **Module 1** you will learn how to Perform a **gender audit** of the status quo in your organization, how to Establish a **gender equality strategy** to foster institutional transformation and how to **Set goals** to improve the level of gender inclusion of your workforce, all with clear explanations and step-by-step instructions. Even more, you will also learn how to **Deal with resistance to change** and opposition to gender equality.

### III.2. Group activity

There are 3 types of activities you can engage your audience in and you will find in the table below a short description for each one of them:

|                 |                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option A</b> | <i>Round tables</i>                                       | <p><i>(5') The group brainstorms ideas for actions to be taken to address this issue (list them on a paper).</i></p> <p><i>(5') Select 3 ideas from the list, and set up 3 tables, each with an idea.</i></p> <p><i>(20') Each group details how to make this action possible and participants can move between tables.</i></p> <p><i>(5') Then summarize the written information with the whole group.</i></p> |
| <b>Option B</b> | <i>Questions &amp; Answers</i>                            | <p><i>(5') Prepare a list of questions (in the methodology guide) and present it to the participants</i></p> <p><i>(20') Form pairs and each pair choose a question and think about the answers</i></p> <p><i>(10') In whole group, the facilitator presents the good answers to the different questions</i></p>                                                                                                |
| <b>Option C</b> | <i>Other game or activity of the facilitator's choice</i> | <i>You can choose and conduct your own activity</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

Here are 5 possible questions and their corresponding answers for **Option B**.

**Question:** What does workplace gender equality truly mean in practice?

**Answer:** Workplace gender equality in practice means that people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities at every level of the organization. This includes equal pay for equal work, fair access to hiring and promotions, balanced representation in leadership, and the elimination of discrimination, harassment, and gender bias in policies, company culture, and daily interactions. It also means recognizing and addressing the different challenges and barriers faced by women through supportive policies like flexible work or parental leave

**Question:** How can gender biases be recognized and what can be done to address them?

**Answer:** Unconscious bias refers to the automatic judgments and stereotypes we hold about others without even realizing it. In the workplace, this can show up in subtle ways—like who gets interrupted in meetings, whose ideas are taken seriously or who has assigned leadership roles, for example:

- Women are more often expected to take on organizational or caregiving roles (note-taking, planning events, managing team morale).
- Men may be more likely to be assigned leadership or technical tasks, even without explicit policies.
- These patterns are not always intentional and often reflect traditional stereotypes rather than actual skills or interests.
- Recognizing these biases is the first step toward creating more balanced, merit-based practices and you can address it by
- Offering training that raises awareness and provides practical tools for inclusive behavior.
- Setting clear diversity and inclusion goals, and monitor progress regularly.
- Creating a culture where everyone feels safe to speak up when they notice bias.

**Question:** During the recruitment process, what can be done to prevent discrimination between men and women?

**Answer:** - Write a gender-neutral job description (do not gender job names, avoid expressions considered too feminine or masculine in rather masculine jobs, do not indicate too many requirements so as not to discourage potential candidates).

- Clearly show that the company is active in favor of equality between men and women.
- Vary distribution channels and favor open procedures and try the introduction of blind CVs.
- Ensure that selection panels include an equal number of men and women.
- Train those responsible for recruitment in gender equality issues.
- Do not devalue career breaks or non-traditional career choices.
- Use objective assessment methods based on candidates' skills during selection and interviews.

**Question:** How to ensure women have equally access to trainings and thus to upskilling and career progression?

**Answer:** It is recommended to avoid hosting training sessions or team-building exercises after work hours or on the weekends or far away from the company as these may be challenging for



staff members who have caring obligations to attend to (family and household responsibilities are still often the primary responsibility of women).

**Question:** How can resistance to gender equality initiatives be addressed within an organization?

**Answer:** Resistance to gender equality measures is common and can stem from fear of change, perceived loss of privilege, or misunderstandings about the purpose and impact of such actions. To effectively address this resistance, organizations should:

- Acknowledge resistance as normal and prepare for it when launching gender equality strategies. Open dialogue and transparent communication are key to diffusing concerns early on.
- Provide gender equality training that clarifies myths, highlights evidence-based benefits (like increased performance and innovation), and contextualizes equality as a shared value—not a zero-sum scenario.
- Engage leadership to demonstrate commitment from the top. Visible endorsement by managers helps normalize gender initiatives and signals strategic importance.
- Use data and diagnostics to inform action and demonstrate disparities that need to be addressed. This builds a factual foundation and minimizes emotionally charged debates.
- Create spaces for employee voices, allowing them to raise questions, express concerns, and contribute to shaping the strategy. Participatory processes foster ownership and reduce defensiveness.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION

*Brief recap the workshop outline, referring to the workshop objectives*

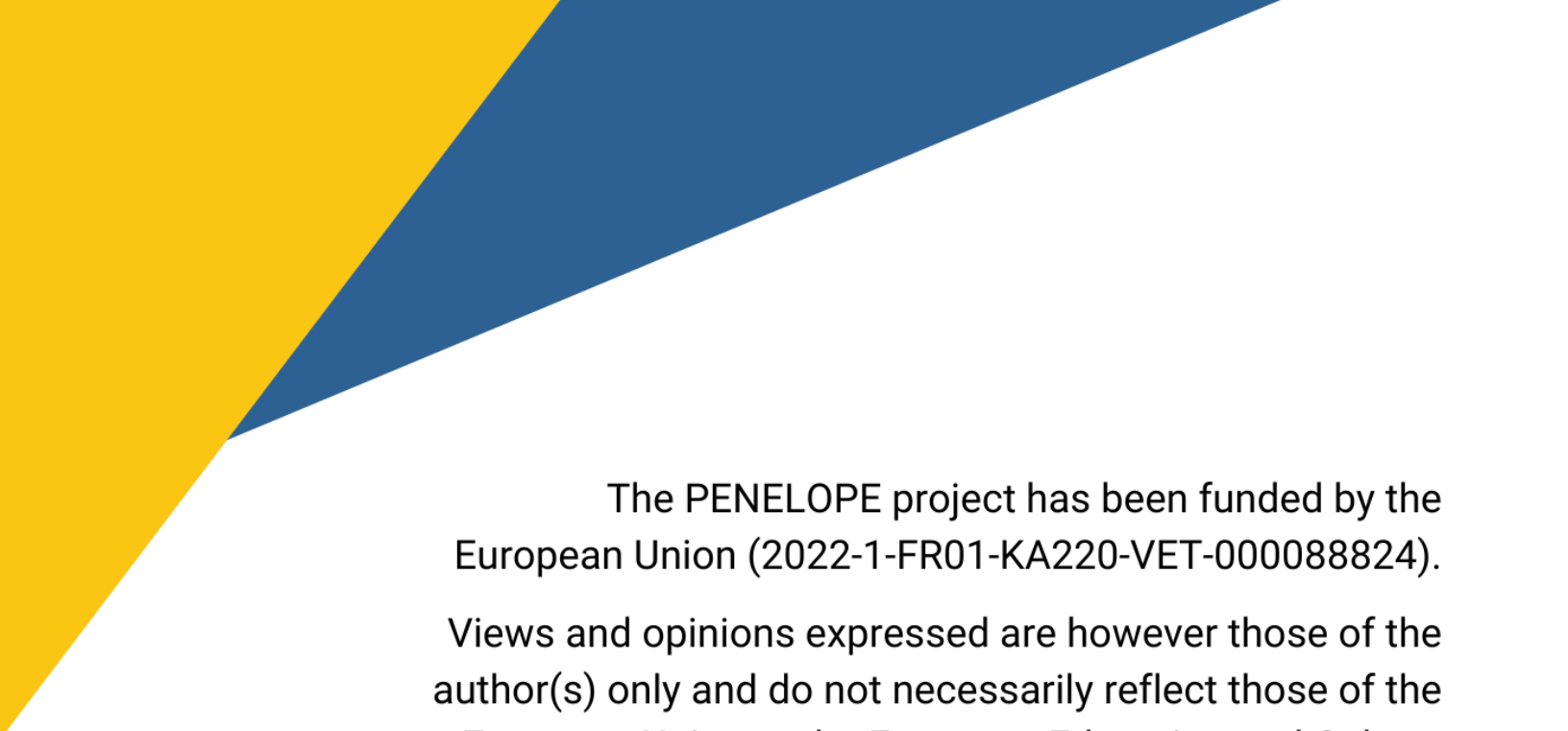
The first goal of this workshop was to show you some of the most important aspects that you should know about gender problematic and the need to implement specific company strategies. This way, you will be able to understand the benefits of taking an interest in this subject, and get inspired to learn more and take appropriate and effective measures.

The second was to present to you the PENELOPE training platform, where you will find a wealth of training content and a variety of activities to help you understand in greater detail and implement actions tailored to the way your company operates.

I hope you will be motivated to take action and to go on to our platform to get the help you need!

*Give time for feedback and questions*

*Evaluate: Thank everyone for their participation and ask them to fill in the questionnaire*



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