

NEWSLETTER #6

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

OUR LAST NEWSLETTER: THE PROJECT CONCLUDES, THE IMPACT CONTINUES



PENELOPE'S FINAL CONFERENCE: CLUSTERS LEADING THE WAY ON GENDER EQUALITY IN SMES

On 30 October 2025, the PENELOPE project marked the end of three years of European collaboration with a dynamic online final conference.

50 partners, cluster organisations, SME representatives and policymakers came together to acknowledge a shared achievement: demonstrating how clusters can be powerful catalysts for gender equality and inclusive innovation.

PENELOPE's work has shown that gender equality is not only a social goal, but a real driver of performance, competitiveness and resilience. Throughout the project, the partners developed a complete set of tools for clusters and SMEs, including a Guidebook, Training Handbook, workshop methodology, video resources and a free e-learning platform designed to support long-term change.

The journey may be complete, but its impact lives on. All materials remain freely accessible [on our website](#), ensuring that clusters and companies across Europe can continue building more inclusive and innovative business ecosystems.

**WATCH THE CONFERENCE
REPLAY [HERE](#).**

**ACCESS THE FINAL
PRESENTATION [HERE](#).**

TURNING LEARNING INTO ACTION: PILOTING THE PENELOPE TOOLS WITH CLUSTERS AND SMES



Over the past months, following the launch of the PENELOPE E-learning platform, our team has been focused on the final and essential phase of the project: transforming knowledge into practical action. This has included the completion of the training methodology and supporting materials, alongside the organisation of a series of pilot workshops across all partner countries.



These workshops brought together two key stakeholder groups. The first included cluster organisations, where the focus was on demonstrating how they can engage with their SME members to raise awareness and inspire concrete steps towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming.



The second set of workshops was addressed directly to SMEs. Here, participants had the opportunity to explore and test the PENELOPE tools hands-on. Through interactive discussions and real-life use cases, SMEs were encouraged to consider how these tools can be integrated into their internal processes, organisational culture, and long-term planning.

The purpose of these pilot workshops was twofold: to collect valuable feedback that will enrich the final documentation of the project, and to spark motivation among participants to carry the project's insights forward. Their input is now helping us ensure that PENELOPE is not only well-designed, but genuinely useful and adaptable to real working environments.

We are encouraged by the positive engagement and commitment shown by our partners and participants. The momentum generated so far gives us strong confidence that the PENELOPE tools and resources will continue to support organisations and SMEs to embed gender equality in meaningful, sustainable ways.

PENELOPE PARTNERS MEET IN LYON TO CLOSE THE PROJECT AND CELEBRATE REMARKABLE RESULTS

On 29 October 2025, the PENELOPE project partners gathered in Lyon for their final in-person meeting, ahead of the project's concluding online conference held the following day. The meeting marked not only the coordination of the final event, but also a moment of reflection, evaluation and shared pride in the results achieved after three years of close collaboration.

The agenda focused on reviewing the project's impact, analysing key performance indicators, and preparing the final reporting. More importantly, it was an opportunity to acknowledge the exceptional cooperation that made PENELOPE's journey both productive and inspiring.



From left to right: Claire Morandeau (Oxalis-SCOP), Corina Kraus (RTxC cluster), Lisa Besnard (France Clusters), Mirela Greti Puiu (RTxC cluster), Audrey Demore and Christine André (Oxalis-SCOP), Raquel Ortega Martínez (AMUEBLA cluster), Lucia Seel (Lucia Seel International Consulting GmbH), Alexandre Iacconi (Oxalis-SCOP).

Going Beyond the Plan

From the very beginning, PENELOPE set out to strengthen gender equality within clusters and SMEs across Europe. Along the way, the partnership consistently exceeded the targets set in the original work plan. Among the concrete achievements:

- 28 good practices identified and documented, almost double the 15 initially planned.
- 20 in-depth interviews conducted with cluster organisations, companies and policy-makers, instead of the 10 foreseen.
- 10 European countries were actively engaged in the project, expanding well beyond the original target of 4.
- 18 practical tools developed for clusters and SMEs, compared to the 10 initially envisioned.
- Our Gender Equality Handbook has been downloaded almost 1000 times!
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These results reflect not only strong project management, but also the commitment and motivation shared across all partners to make gender equality actionable, relevant and accessible to industrial networks.

A Multilingual Effort to Maximise Reach

While all core materials were produced in English, several of them were also translated into French, Spanish, German and Romanian, supporting wider access and practical use across diverse European regions. This multilingual dimension significantly increases the project's long-term potential for replication, adoption and impact.

Teamwork as the Key to Success

The Lyon meeting was also a moment of appreciation. The partners recognised how the project's success stemmed from consistent communication, mutual trust and a shared vision of more inclusive innovation ecosystems.

“PENELOPE worked because we worked very closely together,” the partners agreed. “Our collaboration was not only efficient but truly enriching. Each partner brought unique expertise and commitment, and this made our results stronger than any of us could have achieved alone.”

MAKE USE OF THE PENELOPE E-LEARNING PLATFORM: A PRACTICAL LEARNING TOOL FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING



Since May, the PENELOPE E-Learning Platform has been supporting clusters and SMEs across Europe in taking concrete steps toward gender equality and gender mainstreaming. We invite you now to log in (with the name you want to have on the certificate!), explore, and actively use this resource in your daily work with companies and cluster members.

The platform offers practical, engaging and easy-to-apply training that helps organisations strengthen inclusivity, performance and innovation. Because gender equality is not only a matter of fairness—it is a competitive advantage.

What the platform offers:

- Two tailored learning tracks: one for clusters and one for SMEs
- Clear learning paths with real examples from European organisations
- Gamified modules, interactive content, quizzes
- A completion certificate you can showcase

If you work with clusters or SMEs, this platform is designed explicitly for your needs: to train individuals or teams, raise awareness, support organisational change and inspire concrete action.

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

LOOKING FORWARD

With the project to be officially concluded end of November 2025, the PENELOPE tools, training materials, videos and e-learning platform remain openly available to clusters and SMEs across Europe. The partnership leaves behind a strong and practical legacy that supports ongoing progress in gender-inclusive innovation.

We would like to express our sincere thanks – for your interest, your feedback, your participation in workshops, events and discussions, and for all the big and small contributions that helped PENELOPE create real impact. Without this shared commitment, the project would not have achieved what it has.

Two links you should save:

The PENELOPE Website with all its results: 🖱️ <https://penelope-project.org/activities-results/>

The PENELOPE E-Learning Platform: 🖱️ <https://penelope.learning-platform.eu/en>

The project may be over, but the movement continues – carried forward by the organisations ready to apply what PENELOPE has built.

For more information on the project, you can contact us at: penelope@oxalis-scop.org or follow us on LinkedIn [@PENELOPE-PROJECT](https://www.linkedin.com/company/PENELOPE-PROJECT).

