

NEWSLETTER #1

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



WELCOME TO PENELOPE!

Welcome to the first edition of the PENELOPE project newsletter! Let us briefly introduce you our goals, activities and partners.

We initiated the project out based on our experience that industrial clusters, as regional building blocks of European industrial innovation and competitiveness, have a central role to play in responding to skills challenges within specific territories, sectors and value chains.

At the same time the reality in the companies shows that industrial development is not a gender-neutral process, and that leaving out gender considerations may have differentiating impacts not only in society, but also in the ability of companies, particularly SMEs, to attract talent and stay competitive on mid and long term.

The partners carrying out the project are: Oxalis-Scop (France) as project coordinator, and France Clusters (France), Lucia Seel International Consulting GmbH (Austria), Romanian Textile Concept Cluster (Romania) and AMUEBLA Furniture Cluster (Spain) as project partners.

PENELOPE is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

PENELOPE AIMS TO:

- **DEVELOP, TRANSFER, AND IMPLEMENT INNOVATIVE PRACTICES, FOLLOWING A CLUSTER-BASED APPROACH.**
- **ENABLE GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGIES IN EUROPEAN SMES, FOCUSING ON THE CRITICAL FACTORS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF GENDER-INCLUSIVE INDUSTRIES IN THE EU.**

THE EXPECTED RESULTS OF OUR WORK ARE:

- A handbook to equip cluster teams on gender equality strategies (good practices and interviews, innovative tools guide).
- A toolkit of videos on gender equality strategies for small and medium enterprises.
- A virtual learning environment for SMEs to access all materials free of charge for 5 years (with adaptive training and gamification techniques).
- A methodology for European clusters to directly train SMEs from these contents (guide for trainers and facilitators, toolbox to carry out training sessions and pilot sessions to test the training).



STEP 1: GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTED AND INTERVIEWS CARRIED OUT

We kicked-off the project in Aix-les-Bains (France) in November 2022 and have dedicated our first efforts in collecting good practices from countries across Europe on how cluster organisations, cluster policy makers and other cluster stakeholders are involved in providing companies/SMEs support to induce a change in their organisations towards a better gender balance.

The process is ongoing and we gathered so far more than 15 good practices and interviewed more than 5 cluster stakeholders. These are currently quality checked by the team and promoted as well on our LinkedIn account. We welcome you to read more about these [here](#).

We also initiated the work on the development of a guidebook with tools for a gender mainstreaming approach that will be completed over the summer of 2023.



For this first newsletter we selected a good practice developed by UNIDO – a guide that examines key issues in gender-aware analysis and outlines the gender-based constraints faced by women in different socio-economic contexts. It further discusses the two-way relationship between gender and macroeconomic policies, analysing how gender biases and inequalities act as barriers to economic and social development, and in turn prevent women and men from accessing opportunities on equal terms.

The good practice can be read in detail [here](#).



WHY EU CLUSTERS AND GENDER EQUALITY?

Undeniably, women play an important role in EU countries' path towards a higher level of industrialization. It is also important to point out that industrial development is not a gender-neutral process, and that it may have differentiating impacts on SMEs competitiveness if gender considerations are not considered to ensure equal outcomes with respect to the development and promotion of industrialization, technology, and innovation.

Being one of the main drivers of the competitiveness of EU economy due to their reticular 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.



Communication is essential to make the cluster community aware of our work. In just a short period of time, we created our communication visuals (logo, poster, flyer based on a communication strategy), and now we are now proud to present you our freshly launched website where we will inform the broad audience on our activities and achievements.



Follow us on LinkedIn at [PENELOPE-PROJECT](#) and stay tuned for all our activities!



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