

GEMINI

Gender Equality through Media Investigations and New training Insights

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The research-action project GEMINI — *Gender Equality through Media Investigation and New training Insights* has been funded by the European Commission within the framework of the CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values) Programme. In line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and from an intersectional perspective, GEMINI aims to tackle gender-based stereotypes that create gender inequalities and empower young adults to convey positive messages of gender equality and become ambassadors of inclusive society.

The project was launched on January 9, 2023 and will come to a close on June 8, 2025. It is coordinated by Link Campus University of Rome (principal investigator: professor Marica Spalletta), in collaboration with 8 other Institutions, both public and private, based in 6 European Countries. The academic partners also include the Universities of Aalborg from Denmark, Maynooth University of Ireland, the University of Bucharest from Romania, and the University of Algarve from Portugal. The non-academic partners are the Italian Fondazione Centro Studi Villa Montesca, the training provider Capacity Ireland, the Bulgarian Center for Educational Initiatives (CEI), and the Maltese

Directorate for Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills.

GEMINI responded to a specific call for proposals to promote gender equality (CERV-2022-GE), which looked for innovative research-actions activities aimed at raising awareness —at local, national or EU level — to tackle gender stereotypes in all spheres of life, with a particular focus on youth, as well as other gender equality measures that address stereotypes through an intersectional approach.

Focusing on the representation of gender-related issues in serial dramas and how they can contribute to gender equality, GEMINI addresses European high school students and trainers/teachers in four European Countries (Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Romania) characterized by different socio-cultural contexts and varying levels of gender equality, as measured by the Gender Equality Index (GEI). Its main goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of narrative strategies and audience perceptions, both through qualitative and quantitative research activities, highlighting the media's potential to challenge gender stereotypes and societal norms, and advance gender-sensitive awareness. Beyond empirical research, the

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project also focuses on practical action insights, through the development of an educational toolkit to help integrate serial dramas into school curricula, fostering media literacy and encouraging a deeper understanding of gender issues within educational settings.

The choice to focus on screen serialities is due to the acknowledgement that serial dramas are significant cultural texts that not only reflect but actively shape societal norms and values. As such, they are powerful instruments for raising awareness of critical relevant social issues, including gender-related ones, employing narratives centered both on the storytelling of traditional gender stereotypes and the representation of more gender-inclusive models.

The approach is interdisciplinary, integrating insights from Social Sciences and Humanities. The theoretical framework originates from the GEMINI project's analysis of state of art about gender equality in a comparative perspective, providing an in-depth overview of the existing scholarship concerning the relationship between gender-related issues, youth and adolescents, and serial drama within the media landscape and sociological gender context of the four above-mentioned European countries.

This preliminary background analysis laid the foundations of the project's main research activities, which were carried out through a mixed method approach and were structured in two phases. The first qualitative phase aimed at mapping European young adults' consumption of serial dramas and their interest in gender-related issues (through 15 focus groups involving 190 students aged between 15 and 21 years old) and at detecting teachers and trainers' awareness of European young adults' perception of gender-related issues (through 42 in-depth interviews). The following quantitative phase aimed at measuring the influence of serial dramas on European young adults' perception of gender-related issues, through a structured multilingual transnational survey with more than 1,100 respondents from the four involved Countries.

On the one hand, based on the results from focus groups with European young adults, some exemplary serial dramas from each Country have been chosen and analyzed highlighting 'textual' representations of gender issues that may be singled out as teaching topics in classroom situations. These multi-country analysis merged into the first project research report (Hansen 2024) which blends the study of the creative intentions behind the chosen examples, by approaching serial dramas from desktop production studies, with the development of easy-to-use learning opportunities to teach the textuality/stylistics of gender representations in serial dramas.

On the other hand, the overall results of the quali-quantitative audience research have been widely presented in the second project research report (Spalletta 2024), which provides valuable data and analysis to understand and measure *whether* and *how* European young adults perceive, interpret, and engage with the gender representations offered by serial dramas, as well as teachers' attitudes towards teaching gender issues through the lens of screen seriality. This report offers meaningful insights for integrating serial dramas and gender issues into high school teaching, while considering the similarities and differences observed across the four countries.

Beyond the official project reporting, the research findings have been presented in several conference papers and panels (among which: the 10th European Communication Conference ECREA 2024; the International Conference on Media Industries; the 4th Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies International Conference) and are being published through a series of publications in peer-review journals (*Celebrity Studies*, *Italian Sociological Review*, etc.), including a special issue of *Academic Quarter* (eds. Hansen et al. 2024).

An edited collection entitled *Young Adults, Gender Issues and Serial Dramas. Research-Action Approaches to Consumptions, Patterns and Teaching in the European Mediascape* (eds.

Spalletta, Re, Hansen) will be published by Edinburgh University Press in 2025.

The GEMINI project is just entering its action phase, through the implementation of innovative teaching and learning-by-doing activities. The joint work of academics and professionals from the four involved countries has resulted into the development of an Educational Toolkit, hosted by the GEMINI e-Platform, which will be tested in the upcoming months through three transnational piloting sessions, to be carried out in Italy, Ireland and Bulgaria. During the piloting phase, teachers will receive support in using serial dramas as tools for media literacy and education, through in-depth analysis of gender-related topics depicted in serial narratives. At the same time, students will have access to video lessons and training sessions to learn the fundamentals of serial

drama languages and formats, as well as the techniques of serial storytelling. This will equip them to compete in the GEMINI screenwriting contest, with the winner to be announced at the project's final conference.

The conference, which will be hosted by Link Campus University of Rome on 10-11 April 2025, will bring together scholars from diverse disciplines to explore the complex interactions between serial drama, gender issues, and young audiences. It will also provide an opportunity to consolidate the research and actions developed over the two-year lifespan of the project, while setting the stage for future research that expands and deepens the understanding of these complex issues.