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D5.2. – GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EU AND NATIONAL REGIONAL POLICY MAKERS RESEARCH REPORT

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This document provides guidance and recommendations for policy makers and educational public authorities on the implementation of the GEMINI programme in other schools and the mainstreaming of education

1. Introduction

The **GEMINI project**, Gender Equality through Media Investigation and New Training Insights is a European initiative co-funded by the European Union under the CERV-2022-GE programme. Grounded in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and adopting an intersectional approach, GEMINI aims to counter gender-based stereotypes by empowering young people and educators to critically engage with gender representations in media, particularly television series.

The project seeks to foster gender equality through research, education, and creative engagement. Central to its methodology are pilot programmes implemented in schools across different European socio-cultural contexts, providing a practical and comparative framework to understand and influence youth perceptions of gender identity in audiovisual content.

1.1 Partners Involved in the Pilot Programmes:

The GEMINI pilot programme was developed and implemented in three countries – Bulgaria, Ireland and Italy – with local delivery overseen by the following GEMINI partners:

1.1.1 SDRUZHENIE TCENTAR ZA OBRAZOVATELNI INITSIATIVI (CEI) – Bulgaria

CEI is a Bulgarian non-profit organisation focused on educational reform and inclusive learning practices. Leveraging its deep ties with local schools, CEI facilitates the Bulgarian pilot by training educators and working with students on media analysis, awareness-raising, and the co-creation of communication outputs that reflect gender-equitable perspectives.

1.1.2 CL ADULT EDUCATION & TRAINING LIMITED (Capacity Ireland) – Ireland

Based in Dublin, Capacity Ireland specialises in adult and vocational education with an emphasis on media training, social inclusion, and international mobility through EU programmes. Within GEMINI, it leads the Irish pilot by engaging young people through media literacy education and creative workshops designed to challenge gender stereotypes and promote inclusive narratives.

1.1.3 FONDAZIONE HALLGARTEN-FRANCHETTI CENTRO STUDI VILLA MONTESCA (FCSVM) – Italy

With a strong tradition in progressive education, FCSVM is an Italian foundation dedicated to teacher training, research, and digital innovation in pedagogy. As the lead for the Italian pilot, FCSVM collaborates with schools to guide students and teachers through analytical and creative activities that explore gender representation in television media and encourage the production of gender-equal content.

1.1.4 LINK CAMPUS UNIVERSITY (LCU) – Italy

Based in Rome, Link Campus University is a forward-looking academic institution with a strong commitment to interdisciplinary research and innovation in the fields of communication, policy analysis, and digital transformation. As the coordinator of the GEMINI project, LCU leads the overall management and ensures cross-country coherence across all pilot activities. It also spearheads the project's research, monitoring, and evaluation work packages, supporting the development of evidence-based methodologies for addressing gender representation in media.

These partners were directly responsible for conducting pilot activities in their respective countries. The pilots involved high school students and educators in analysing the portrayal of gender identities in TV series and exploring their effects on gender norms. Activities included media content analysis, surveys, focus groups, educational workshops, and the development of creative outputs such as audiovisual products and screenwriting.

By engaging young adults in a reflective and participatory process, the GEMINI pilots worked to build critical media literacy and foster positive narratives around gender equality, contributing to a more inclusive European media landscape.

2. Review of Pilot Programmes (Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy)

The GEMINI project piloted its educational toolkit in schools across Bulgaria, Ireland and Italy. Each country offered unique insights into the implementation of the toolkit, revealing both effective strategies and challenges through structured activity and participant feedback.

The GEMINI pilot across Bulgaria, Ireland and Italy demonstrated the toolkit's potential in fostering awareness and discussion around gender equality. Each context presented specific challenges, ranging from legislation and institutional barriers to limited time and rigid curricula. Nevertheless, the pilots highlighted how adaptability, creativity and supportive learning environments can make gender-focused education both effective and engaging.

2.1. Bulgaria

The Bulgarian pilot was carried out in three schools located in Sofia and Pernik, involving 60 students and five teachers. Activities were tailored to suit the needs and strengths of each school, and took place through extracurricular clubs, literature classes and philosophy sessions. The focus was on creative and interactive methods, such as filmmaking, scriptwriting and ethical debates, which allowed students to explore gender equality and related social issues in an engaging and reflective way.

SWOT Analysis of the GEMINI Pilot in Bulgaria

Strengths:

- High levels of student engagement through hands-on filmmaking and storytelling.
- A multidisciplinary and flexible approach encouraged broad participation.

Weaknesses:

- Legislative changes introduced in 2024 limiting discussions on gender identity.
- Conservative attitudes and self-censorship among educators reduced the toolkit's impact.

Opportunities:

- Creative, practical activities can be expanded to sustain student interest.
- Strong potential for wider outreach through extracurricular learning environments.

Threats:

- Political sensitivities may continue to limit future curricular integration.
- Concern among educators about possible administrative repercussions

2.2. Ireland

In Ireland, the GEMINI toolkit was used with 59 post-primary students in Dublin and Tullamore, as well as 107 student teachers at Maynooth University. Despite obstacles in integrating the material within the official curriculum, the programme found success through extracurricular settings and community arts initiatives. A writing competition helped spark student creativity and participation.

SWOT Analysis of the GEMINI Pilot in Ireland

Strengths:

- Strong student engagement, especially in creative and non-formal settings.
- Inclusion in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses supports long-term uptake.

Weaknesses:

- Resistance from school leadership due to rigid curriculum structures and religious patronage.
- Heavy teacher workloads made it difficult to introduce new material.

Opportunities:

- Expansion through community partnerships and non-denominational schools.
- Continued integration within teacher education for sustained impact.

Threats:

- Persistent curriculum rigidity and teacher shortages may hinder broader use.
- Slow progress in shifting towards more secular school governance.

2.3. Italy

The Italian pilot involved 214 students and 32 teachers across six schools in Lazio and Umbria. Activities combined theoretical learning with practical storytelling and scriptwriting sessions and culminated in a national screenwriting competition. Students received support through expert mentoring, peer review sessions and access to digital resources.

SWOT Analysis of the GEMINI Pilot in Italy

Strengths:

- The toolkit's adaptable format enabled smooth implementation in varied school contexts.
- Students and teachers responded positively, with high levels of participation.

Weaknesses:

- Limited time for students to develop scripts and fully engage in creative processes.
- Some restrictions on creativity due to the structure of the scriptwriting themes.

Opportunities:

- Scope to expand the mentoring component and practical activities.
- Potential to offer students more freedom in shaping their narratives.

Threats:

- Time pressures and curricular constraints could limit future implementation.
- Risk of reduced student motivation if creative boundaries feel too narrow.

3. Learning from the GEMINI Pilots

As well as providing valuable learning and personal or professional development opportunities for students and teachers alike, the experience gained, and lessons learned from delivering the GEMINI pilots in Bulgaria, Ireland and Italy have been used to inform the guidelines and recommendations for EU and national/regional policy makers that are the focus of this report. We have set out below the key lessons, enablers, barriers and conclusions from each of the pilots:

3.1. Lessons Learned – GEMINI Bulgaria Pilot

The GEMINI pilot in Bulgaria took place under severe legal and societal constraints following the August 2024 amendments to the Preschool and School Education Act, which banned the discussion of gender identity and non-traditional sexual orientation in schools. Despite these barriers, the pilot was successfully implemented in three secondary schools, with significant adaptation to preserve the project's core pedagogical value while respecting legal limitations.

3.1.1 Key Enablers

- **Strong teacher engagement:** 5 teachers directly led student scenario development, while an additional 25 teachers participated in training and preparatory sessions (11 from 18th School, 8 from 51st School, 6 from Simeon Radev School).
- **Student enthusiasm:** 51 students participated across the three schools (22 male, 29 female), showing high motivation for hands-on activities like filming and acting.
- **Adaptable toolkit:** the scriptwriting structure allowed students to explore social themes and propose original content within the boundaries of legal constraints.
- **Strategic support:** CEI's constant involvement provided confidence and pedagogical reinforcement to school staff.
- **Extracurricular format:** piloting through weekly clubs offered a safer, more flexible space for implementation.

3.1.2 Key Barriers

- **Legislative restrictions:** the most significant obstacle was the legal amendment of August 2024, which explicitly prohibited the promotion or discussion of gender identity and non-traditional sexual orientation in the school context. This rendered five of GEMINI's original loglines unusable and created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. The vague and ideologically charged language of the law discouraged teachers from engaging with any content remotely connected to its wording.
- **Institutional fear and withdrawal:** the sudden withdrawal of support from the National Inspectorate of Education, previously a key partner, was a severe blow. School principals, fearing administrative sanctions or reputational damage, limited their engagement to teacher-only training formats or imposed content restrictions. The atmosphere of distrust was exacerbated by media pressure and politically motivated attacks on educators.
- **Content censorship and self-censorship:** teachers were placed in a precarious position, many shared that even indirect engagement with topics such as inclusion, identity, or emotional representation could be seen as subversive. The result was a de facto narrowing of educational space, where educators practiced self-censorship to avoid conflict with the law.
- **Limited access to students:** several schools made clear that while they valued the GEMINI methodology, they could not allow it to be piloted with students under current conditions. This structural limitation meant that the number of participating students was far lower than initially planned, and engagement had to take place outside the formal classroom.
- **Short piloting timeframe and fragmented engagement:** because the pilot could only be conducted in the form of weekly extracurricular sessions, scenario development progressed slowly. In most cases, students had just begun gaining creative momentum when the piloting phase ended. Only two of the six scenarios were completed and submitted within the official timeframe; four more were finalized afterwards.

3.1.3 Conclusion

The Bulgarian GEMINI pilot stands as a testament to the potential of educational innovation even under deeply adverse conditions. Despite the fear, institutional hesitation, and legal constraints, CEI and participating educators succeeded in delivering a meaningful, values-based learning experience for students.

The students' enthusiasm for storytelling, especially through visual formats, and the teachers' willingness to experiment with new pedagogical methods, demonstrate the adaptability and relevance of the GEMINI approach. Though thematically restricted, the pilot preserved the core aims of the project: to encourage empathy, critical thinking, and reflection on social norms.

The experience reveals that in politically charged environments, extracurricular activities offer a refuge for creative exploration, and that external partners can play a vital role in enabling pedagogical courage. With clearer support structures and policy alignment, this type of work could reach a much broader segment of schools and learners across Bulgaria.

3.2 Lessons Learned – GEMINI Ireland Pilot

The GEMINI project pilot in Ireland provided critical insights into both the strengths and the challenges associated with integrating gender equality education into post-primary school curricula. Understanding these factors can inform future implementation efforts.

3.2.1 Key Enablers

- **Flexible and adaptive approaches:** a notable success factor for the Irish pilot was the ability to flexibly adapt strategies to local conditions and barriers. By collaborating closely with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students and community-based organizations, GEMINI effectively target youth populations despite institutional obstacles. This adaptability proved essential in maintaining momentum and ensuring active participation in environments that otherwise presented significant constraints.
- **Student creativity and engagement:** student enthusiasm emerged strongly as an asset during the pilot, particularly through engagement in creative exercises such as the GEMINI writing competition. Collaborations with community organizations played a crucial role in nurturing and directing this creativity, thereby significantly increasing student interest and active participation in gender equality topics.

3.2.2 Key Barriers

- **Patronage and school leadership:** the structure of school patronage in Ireland, dominated by Catholic diocesan trusteeship (accounting for around 90% of schools), posed substantial challenges. This governance structure limited the

flexibility of schools to openly adopt curricula addressing gender and sexuality, resulting in leadership hesitation or resistance to implement GEMINI initiatives without explicit institutional endorsement. Despite national policy ambitions aimed at diversifying patronage, the pace of change has been slow, reinforcing conservative attitudes within educational governance.

- **Teacher overburden:** Ireland faces an ongoing shortage of qualified teachers, significantly impacting their ability to take on additional curricular projects such as GEMINI. Teachers frequently reported a lack of adequate preparation time, as their allocated planning periods were often redirected towards mandatory duties or extracurricular activities. This reduced their capacity to engage effectively with the GEMINI materials and integrate them into existing classroom practices.
- **Curriculum rigidity:** the highly structured and examination-driven nature of Ireland's secondary education curriculum (Junior and Leaving Certificates) further constrained curricular flexibility. Teachers are strongly incentivized to teach content directly linked to these national examinations. Although gender and sexuality education are included within Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE), educators predominantly rely on standardized resources due to uncertainty or lack of training, leaving minimal scope for introducing innovative approaches like GEMINI.

3.2.3 Conclusions

The GEMINI pilot in Ireland highlighted crucial elements necessary for successful gender equality education, notably strong institutional support, flexible curricular frameworks, and manageable workloads for educators. Future implementation efforts should continue leveraging community-based partnerships, advocating for institutional policy reforms, and embedding gender equality education within Initial Teacher Education programmes to build a robust and sustainable approach.

3.3 Lessons Learned – GEMINI Italy Pilot

The Italian pilot of the GEMINI project, implemented by Link Campus University (LCU) and Fondazione Centro Studi Villa Montesca (FCSVM), provided a valuable opportunity to test the educational toolkit within national frameworks.

Link Campus University (LCU): the LCU pilot was fully integrated into the PCTO (Percorsi per le Competenze Trasversali e l'Orientamento / Pathways for Transversal Skills and Orientation) programme, involving three high schools in the Lazio Region. This format allows upper secondary students to participate in practical, skills-oriented experiences that support both personal development and curricular goals.

Fondazione Centro Studi Villa Montesca (FCSVM): in the Umbria Region, the FCSVM pilot included one school following the PCTO pathway. In two additional schools, the toolkit was piloted through teacher-led classroom sessions during regular lessons. In these settings, students engaged in group work using exercises provided on the GEMINI e-platform.

Students participated in interactive workshops and scriptwriting exercises, culminating in the creation of original media pitches. The initiative received highly positive feedback from both students and teachers, who appreciated the integration of creative expression with critical reflection on gender and media.

3.3.1 Key Enablers

- **Modularity and flexibility of the toolkit:** The modular nature of the GEMINI toolkit emerged as one of its primary strengths during piloting, particularly at Link Campus University (LCU). This feature enabled trainers to tailor the educational experience to the specific needs of their classes. The thematic unit structure allowed for step-by-step progression while accommodating variations in timing and depth. This adaptability made the toolkit compatible with the PCTO model, aligning with ministerial guidelines and providing a structured yet creative environment for student engagement. Additionally, the modular approach facilitated interdisciplinary exploration, fostering links with literature, civic education, and digital storytelling.
- **Interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaboration:** the involvement of trainers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds such as media studies, education, and sociology enriched the sessions by merging theoretical perspectives with practical storytelling guidance. The participation of university student tutors added a crucial intergenerational component, establishing a peer-to-peer learning environment. These tutors, trained in the GEMINI methodology, encouraged high school

students to express their ideas freely and bridged the gap between secondary and tertiary education.

- **Creative engagement:** the toolkit's focus on storytelling and serial narrative creation deeply resonated with students, who demonstrated high levels of engagement and creativity. Script development activities often reflected students' personal experiences and perspectives on inclusion, gender equality, and media representation. Some students even incorporated digital tools, including AI for character design, reflecting adaptability and innovation. Motivation was especially evident during filmmaking and acting components, notably in the Umbria Region, where practical tools such as cameras were provided to students. This hands-on approach enhanced engagement, promoting individual expression and collaborative work even among students lacking formal digital skills.

3.3.2 Key Barriers

- **Prescriptive script development:** early in the pilot, trainers noted that rigid adherence to predefined loglines could inhibit creativity. While log frames were useful starting points, they sometimes restricted student expression. Adopting a more flexible approach later in the sessions allowed students to use prompts as inspiration rather than strict frameworks, leading to more diverse and personalized narratives.
- **Lack of digital competences:** despite being digital natives, students showed significant gaps in digital competence, particularly with desktop-based tools and non-intuitive software (e.g., video editing). While comfortable with smartphones and tablets, they struggled with the technical demands of audiovisual production, especially during the workshop phase.
- **Time constraints and feedback opportunities:** the limited time available for script development and revision posed a challenge. Although students were eager to expand their ideas, school schedules and the intensity of the programme often limited deeper refinement. Teachers and trainers suggested extending timelines or introducing follow-up sessions to support a more complete creative process. Structured feedback from both peers and educators at multiple points was also seen as critical to enhancing learning outcomes.

3.3.3 Conclusions

The Italian pilot of the GEMINI project demonstrated that modular, participatory approaches to gender and media education can be effectively integrated into national curricula, particularly within flexible structures like PCTO. The combination of

interdisciplinary teaching, collaboration between universities and schools, and an emphasis on student voice resulted in a dynamic and impactful learning experience. The findings highlight the need to sustain and institutionalize such initiatives to embed creative, reflective practices within mainstream education.

4. Policy recommendations

The GEMINI project has shown that media literacy and gender equality education can be meaningfully integrated into secondary education across different European contexts. Through creative, media-based activities, the programme helps students think critically about gender representation and social norms. The policy recommendations that follow outline key principles for embedding the approach in diverse national settings. Their application will depend on local conditions, including curriculum structures, teacher training systems, and available funding.

For example, In Ireland, systemic challenges such as a centralised curriculum, exam pressures, and limited school autonomy make it difficult to introduce new initiatives. However, GEMINI has been successfully embedded into Initial Teacher Education at Maynooth University, where it is now part of core teacher training. Further expansion in schools would require additional resources and government support.

In Italy, the toolkit was delivered through the national PCTO framework, which supports skills-based learning in upper secondary schools. Strong collaboration between schools and universities contributed to the pilot's success. Wider adoption will require policy-level endorsement, CPD support, and stronger communication with families.

In Bulgaria, the pilot took place in a more restrictive policy environment, with legal limits on discussing gender identity in schools. Despite this, GEMINI was delivered in extracurricular settings with support from committed educators. The experience highlighted the potential of informal learning spaces to foster creativity and critical thinking, especially where classroom delivery is not possible.

As part of the sustainability function of the GEMINI project, the GEMINI partners are open to future collaboration with institutions and organisations across Europe. This includes potential future work to support adapting the toolkit to national contexts, advising on local and national level implementation, and contributing to inclusive and creative education, both in the countries represented within the GEMINI project partnership and more widely throughout the European Union.

4.1 GEMINI Policy recommendations Bulgaria

The GEMINI pilot in Bulgaria highlights the urgent need for educational policies that protect teacher autonomy, support inclusion, and facilitate the safe introduction of sensitive social themes through creative methods. Although national constraints exist, specific steps can be taken to ensure future projects have space to thrive.

4.1.1 National and local education policy

- Provide clear, legally sound frameworks for addressing social justice, identity, and inclusion through education, even when these topics cannot be addressed directly. Define what is permissible and provide pedagogical tools that help navigate grey areas.
- Officially recognise extracurricular project-based learning (PBL) initiatives such as GEMINI as integral to developing critical thinking and civic engagement. This recognition should come with guidance, resources, and protection for schools.
- Create a pathway for EU-funded and internationally validated educational programs to be integrated into national practice, reducing dissonance between European priorities and domestic politics.

4.1.2 School-Level and institutional support

- Encourage school leaders to treat extracurricular clubs and workshops as semi-autonomous spaces for pedagogical experimentation. Offer institutional support, not just permission.
- Establish support networks where teachers can exchange strategies for working within constrained contexts, including adapting scripts and themes to local sensitivities without sacrificing the core of the project.
- Shield schools and educators from media harassment and politically motivated attacks. Publicly support staff who work within the law and follow professional standards.

4.1.3 Student-Centred approaches

- Foster autonomy by allowing students to choose and shape the themes of their narratives, as long as they align with the broader goals of inclusion and critical reflection.
- Promote access to media-making tools, such as cameras and editing software, as standard elements of civic and arts education.
- Support student storytelling as a legitimate pedagogical practice for developing voice, empathy, and media literacy. Encourage group work and serial storytelling as powerful formats for reflection and collaboration.

4.2 GEMINI Policy recommendations Ireland

The GEMINI project pilot in Ireland provided valuable insights into both the strengths and challenges involved in integrating gender equality education into post-primary school curricula. GEMINI aims to promote critical thinking about gender representation in media, particularly television, through creative educational engagement. The pilot experience demonstrated the toolkit's relevance, especially in light of growing concerns about media influence on youth identity formation and social norms.

Ireland's education system, however, presents a number of systemic obstacles that any new programme must navigate. With highly centralised curriculum control, tight exam-focused timelines, and school governance heavily shaped by religious patronage, introducing new content, particularly content related to gender and equality, requires careful strategic planning. Additionally, staff shortages and increasing teacher workloads limit the capacity of educators to take on non-mandatory initiatives, no matter how valuable they may be.

Despite these constraints, the Irish pilot showed that the GEMINI toolkit can thrive in flexible, supportive environments, particularly when introduced through Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and extracurricular activities. Drawing on these experiences, the following recommendations outline practical pathways to enhance implementation, embed sustainability, and enable the toolkit's expansion within and beyond Ireland.

4.2.1 Institutional support and leadership

Strong institutional support is a cornerstone for the success of the GEMINI programme. Without endorsement from school leadership and system-level actors, even the most well-designed educational resources are unlikely to be implemented at scale. It is recommended that the following issues be considered and addressed as part of any

further work to implement the GEMINI project approach and materials within secondary schools in Ireland:

- **School leadership buy-in:** securing early support from school principals and senior management is essential. When leadership prioritises a programme like GEMINI, for example by allocating staff meeting time, adjusting timetables, or giving public backing, it sends a clear message to staff and parents that gender equality education is a legitimate and valued part of school life. Leadership endorsement can also help navigate sensitivities, particularly in schools where there may be hesitation around addressing gender and media topics.
- **Clear and consistent communication:** transparency and clarity in communication are vital when introducing GEMINI into school settings. Materials should include simple summaries for parents, governors, and school leaders that explain what the toolkit is, how it works, and how it supports national education goals. Messaging should stress the benefits for students, including improved media literacy, critical thinking, and respectful interpersonal relationships. These are skills that support personal development and citizenship education.
- **Leverage trusted teacher networks:** educators are more likely to adopt new resources when they are introduced by trusted peers. Building connections through teacher networks such as Education Centres, professional associations, and informal peer groups can help build momentum organically. Teachers who have successfully implemented GEMINI can act as ambassadors, sharing practical tips and showing how the toolkit can be delivered even within time-pressured contexts. These networks also support ongoing peer learning and adaptation.
- **Timing and curriculum alignment:** the rollout of GEMINI should be timed to avoid clashing with exam preparation periods, such as the lead-up to Junior and Leaving Certificate assessments. Flexible periods like Transition Year are ideal for piloting or embedding the toolkit, as they provide space for creative, cross-curricular learning. Additionally, linking GEMINI activities to existing curricular subjects such as SPHE, CSPE, English, or Media Studies can help teachers justify its inclusion within tightly prescribed timetables.
- **engage progressive early adopters:** focusing initial efforts on schools that already have a strong commitment to equality, inclusion, and innovation can help generate success stories that inspire others. Multi-denominational and Educate Together schools, for example, often have greater curricular flexibility and more inclusive ethos statements that align naturally with GEMINI's objectives. Demonstrating impact in these settings through well-documented case studies can create a ripple effect across more traditional or cautious schools.

- **Departmental endorsement:** support from the Department of Education is vital for mainstream adoption. While the GEMINI toolkit can initially be implemented through grassroots and community partnerships, formal recognition, such as inclusion in continuing professional development (CPD) offerings, alignment with curricular reform discussions, or integration into national teaching resources, would greatly enhance legitimacy. Government backing also helps reassure schools that the programme is in line with policy objectives and is not in conflict with the religious or moral frameworks of particular patrons.

4.2.2 Integration within teacher training programmes

Embedding GEMINI into teacher training is one of the most effective strategies for long-term, sustainable implementation. It ensures that the next generation of teachers enters the classroom already equipped with the skills, understanding, and confidence to address gender equality through media literacy.

This element of the GEMINI project has essentially already been mainstreamed within Maynooth University's highly regarded Professional Master of Education (PME) programme for trainee secondary school teachers teaching training programmes, accredited by the Teaching Council of Ireland and we recommend that the following issues be considered and addressed as part of any further work to implement the GEMINI project approach and materials within teacher training programmes, either in Ireland or other European Union countries:

- **Initial Teacher Education (ITE):** including GEMINI within ITE programmes enables student teachers to explore both the content and pedagogical strategies needed to facilitate conversations around gender and media. Modules on digital literacy, diversity in education, and SPHE already exist in most ITE institutions and offer a natural home for the toolkit. The pilot at Maynooth University showed that when trainee teachers are introduced to GEMINI through structured workshops and assessments, they not only learn how to use the materials but also begin to reflect critically on their own attitudes and assumptions. This dual impact on both content knowledge and professional identity is invaluable.
- **Global Citizenship Education (GCE) alignment:** GCE is increasingly recognised across the EU as a vital component of education for democratic participation and social responsibility. GEMINI's intersectional approach, which addresses human rights, cultural representation, and gender-based stereotyping, fits neatly within this framework. Positioning GEMINI as a practical GCE tool helps integrate it within national and European education strategies and opens up opportunities for further funding, research, and cross-border collaboration.

- **Professional learning communities:** establishing communities of practice within and across ITE institutions helps ensure continuity of use and curriculum integration. Universities can host workshops, provide mentoring, and share updates as the toolkit evolves. These collaborative spaces also offer valuable feedback loops to refine materials based on classroom experience. Encouraging action research projects or school placement activities centred around GEMINI could further enhance engagement and produce evidence of its effectiveness.
- **Sustained University Partnerships:** long-term partnerships with teacher training universities are essential. Beyond pilot activities, universities can become resource hubs that facilitate annual training sessions, contribute to ongoing curriculum updates, and serve as points of contact for interested schools. Embedding GEMINI as a regular feature of teacher education programmes, rather than as a short-term intervention, ensures that it remains a living and evolving resource grounded in educational best practice.

4.2.3 Guidelines for future development

Looking ahead, there are several pathways through which GEMINI can expand its reach and deepen its impact. These opportunities build on the strengths of the Irish pilot while addressing the structural barriers that remain:

- **Broaden community collaboration:** while schools are key sites for GEMINI implementation, community settings offer complementary avenues for engagement. Youth groups, arts organisations, libraries, and after-school programmes can deliver GEMINI content through creative projects, discussions, and media production activities. These spaces often have more flexibility and fewer bureaucratic constraints, allowing for deeper and more experimental engagement. Moreover, working with local NGOs and informal educators can help reach young people who may not engage fully with school-based programming.
- **Document and disseminate case studies:** capturing and sharing stories from successful implementations will be crucial in building confidence among hesitant schools and educators. These case studies should highlight practical approaches, student outcomes, and teacher reflections. Packaging them as short videos, infographics, or accessible written reports makes them easier to share via social media, conferences, and education networks. They can also serve as advocacy tools in discussions with policymakers and potential funders.
- **Engage in education reform processes:** Ireland is currently undergoing gradual reform in areas such as school patronage, curriculum review, and inclusive education. GEMINI's content and approach align well with these trends. Contributing insights from the pilot to relevant consultation processes or

stakeholder discussions positions GEMINI as a ready-made solution for advancing gender equality, digital literacy, and student wellbeing within the national education strategy.

- **Support creativity and student voice:** one of GEMINI's unique strengths is its emphasis on student-led media creation. Whether through screenwriting, video production, or digital storytelling, these activities give students agency and make abstract concepts tangible. Expanding these opportunities by hosting national competitions, publishing student work, or inviting creative professionals to mentor students can boost engagement and provide visibility for the programme. It also reinforces the message that young people's voices matter in shaping a more equal and inclusive media landscape.

4.3 Policy Recommendations Italy

The Italian pilot of the GEMINI project, coordinated by Link Campus University and Fondazione Centro Studi Villa Montesca, confirmed the educational value of the GEMINI toolkit in fostering media literacy, critical thinking and gender-sensitive education through creative and participatory learning approaches. The recommendations outlined below aim to support its further integration into Italian educational policy and practice.

4.3.1 Considerations for further implementation

We recommend that the following issues be considered and addressed as part of any further work to implement the GEMINI project approach and materials within secondary schools in Italy:

- **Integration within PCTO and national curricular frameworks:** the successful use of the toolkit within the PCTO (Percorsi per le Competenze Trasversali e l'Orientamento) format demonstrates strong potential for formal adoption. The Ministry of Education should consider endorsing GEMINI as a recognised resource that contributes to citizenship education, media literacy and inclusive teaching. Such recognition would facilitate its broader use across schools and ensure alignment with existing educational objectives.
- **Support from school leadership:** effective implementation depends on the support of school leaders. Regional education offices should provide school heads with evidence-based guidance that highlights the toolkit's relevance to student wellbeing, inclusive values and competence-based learning. Administrative adjustments, such as timetable flexibility and CPD accreditation, would help legitimise its use within ordinary teaching schedules.

- **Formalisation of school-university collaboration:** the pilot benefitted from strong cooperation between secondary schools and universities. These partnerships enabled practical mentoring and enriched the learning environment through interdisciplinary support. National and regional authorities should encourage the formalisation of such partnerships by creating incentives and frameworks that enable universities to act as dissemination hubs and training centres.
- **Communication and parental engagement:** teachers involved in the pilot expressed concern about potential resistance from parents. Clear communication materials should therefore be developed for families, including summary guides, project outcomes and explanatory videos. Schools should be supported to organise awareness-raising events that involve parents as partners in the educational process, helping to build trust and transparency around the project's aims and content.

4.3.2 Considerations for integration within teacher training programmes

We recommend that the following issues be considered and addressed as part of any further work to implement the GEMINI project approach and materials within teacher training in Italy:

- **Inclusion in pre-service and in-service training:** to ensure sustainability, the GEMINI toolkit should be embedded in initial teacher education and continuing professional development. Modules on inclusive pedagogy, digital education and creative methodologies offer natural entry points. Teacher training institutions should be encouraged to include practical training on the GEMINI approach, allowing trainee teachers to pilot the materials during placements.
- **Peer-led approaches and tutor support:** the involvement of university student tutors was a key success factor in the Italian pilot. Building this model into teacher education can enhance the reach and impact of the toolkit. Student teachers can also act as facilitators during piloting phases, gaining valuable classroom experience while supporting peer learning among students.
- **Capacity building for inclusive and creative pedagogy:** feedback from participating teachers indicates a strong demand for professional tools that address complex social themes in accessible and engaging ways. CPD programmes focused on creative teaching strategies, inclusive communication and gender representation in media should be expanded, supported by materials that are adaptable to a variety of school contexts.

4.3.3 Guidelines for future development

There are clear opportunities for GEMINI to strengthen its presence in Italy by building on the success of the pilot and responding to the specific needs identified in participating schools. These future pathways aim to enhance digital inclusion, promote student creativity, and deepen collaboration between education and the cultural sector based on the following guidelines:

- **Ongoing evaluation and sharing of practice:** a framework for post-project reflection and knowledge exchange should be established. This could take the form of national workshops, online communities of practice, or collaborative evaluation projects. Ongoing feedback from teachers and students will support continuous improvement and maintain the toolkit's relevance.
- **Promoting student creativity beyond the classroom:** the participatory nature of GEMINI should remain central to its future development. Initiatives such as national competitions, online exhibitions and partnerships with cultural organisations could provide students with opportunities to share their work publicly. This would not only enhance engagement but also amplify young people's voices on themes of gender, identity and representation.
- **Improving digital skills and access:** despite high levels of engagement, the pilot revealed gaps in students' digital competences, particularly with editing tools and non-touchscreen devices. Future implementation should include basic media production training, either as part of the curriculum or as supplementary workshops. Improving access to equipment and software will be essential for ensuring equitable participation.
- **Integrating artificial intelligence tools:** students in the pilot explored the use of AI tools to support character development and visual storytelling. Future iterations of the toolkit could formally incorporate AI in the scriptwriting process, helping students to develop both creative and critical digital skills. Dedicated modules could address the use of AI in media, including discussion of algorithmic bias and representation.
- **Links with the creative industries:** there is clear potential to strengthen links between education and the creative sector. Opportunities such as internships, workshops and guest mentorships with professionals in media and storytelling would enhance the real-world relevance of GEMINI. These collaborations could also help students develop pathways into further education and employment in the cultural and creative industries.

5. European-Level Recommendations

The GEMINI project has demonstrated that media literacy, creative storytelling, and gender-sensitive pedagogy can be effectively combined to address gender stereotypes and promote inclusive education across diverse European contexts. While each national pilot reflected specific local conditions, several cross-cutting lessons and opportunities emerged. The following recommendations are intended to guide EU-level policy development and support the wider adoption of the GEMINI programme across member states.

Based on the experience and knowledge gained and the lessons learned from the development and implementation of the national level GEMINI pilots in Bulgaria, Ireland and Italy, the GEMINI project partnership proposes the following recommendations for European level policy makers:

5.1 Embed GEMINI within European frameworks on education and inclusion

The GEMINI approach aligns with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the European Education Area objectives on equity and digital competence. Member States should consider incorporating GEMINI into national action plans addressing gender equality in education and lifelong learning. Its emphasis on critical media literacy also supports the Digital Education Action Plan and can contribute to broader efforts around citizenship education and combating disinformation.

5.2 Recognise GEMINI as a model for interdisciplinary and inclusive pedagogy

The success of GEMINI lies in its combination of media analysis, scriptwriting, and youth engagement. European education authorities and networks such as eTwinning and School Education Gateway could promote the toolkit as a model of innovative, cross-curricular pedagogy. This would encourage schools to integrate it across disciplines such as social studies, languages, ethics, and media studies.

5.3 Adapt implementation strategies to national contexts

The varied experiences across Bulgaria, Ireland, and Italy show that flexibility is key. In countries with restrictive legislation or conservative cultural climates, extra-curricular and community-based implementations may be more viable than direct curricular integration. Conversely, in contexts with more curricular flexibility (e.g., Italy's PCTO programme), formal integration may be more feasible. National ministries should be

encouraged to pilot different delivery pathways, including within teacher training, informal learning, and cultural institutions.

5.4 Support safe spaces for gender discourse in schools

EU institutions should reaffirm the importance of safe, inclusive educational environments where gender issues can be discussed critically and constructively. This is particularly vital in countries where legal or political conditions restrict open dialogue. Member States must ensure that teachers are protected from reprisals and provided with legal clarity on what is permissible within the classroom.

5.5 Facilitate transnational cooperation and knowledge sharing

To build momentum and ensure continuous development, GEMINI should be included in Erasmus+ and CERV programme calls as a recommended framework for gender equality education. Transnational projects could focus on expanding the toolkit, supporting joint teacher training initiatives, or developing common metrics for impact assessment. An EU-supported online platform for sharing case studies, student outputs, and teaching adaptations would also enhance visibility and mutual learning.

5.6 Integrate GEMINI into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) across Europe

The pilot in Ireland demonstrated the potential of embedding GEMINI in ITE programmes. By equipping new teachers with the skills and confidence to use creative, inclusive methods, the programme can achieve lasting systemic change. Education faculties across the EU should be encouraged to include GEMINI within modules on citizenship education, digital literacy, and pedagogy for diversity.

5.7 Use extra-curricular and informal learning channels as entry points

In countries where formal curriculum change is slow or politically contested, GEMINI can be successfully introduced through youth centres, film clubs, public libraries, or after-school programmes. These spaces offer greater flexibility and may reach more diverse groups of learners. European funding mechanisms should support local NGOs, arts organisations, and civic educators in adapting GEMINI for these contexts.

5.8 Develop a European network of GEMINI schools and practitioners

A community of practice comprising schools, universities, youth workers, and cultural organisations could help sustain interest and innovation. This network could organise annual student competitions, publish collective outputs, and host international conferences. It would also serve as a support system for educators facing challenges in local implementation.

6. Conclusions

The GEMINI project has shown that media literacy and gender-sensitive education can be meaningfully combined to support critical thinking, creativity, and inclusion among young people across Europe. Through its implementation in Italy, Ireland and Bulgaria, GEMINI has demonstrated that an adaptable and modular educational toolkit can engage students and teachers alike, even in very different national and institutional contexts.

Each pilot provided valuable insights. In Italy, the integration of GEMINI into the PCTO framework highlighted how the toolkit can support formal curriculum objectives while encouraging student creativity. In Ireland, the programme's success in extracurricular and teacher training settings pointed to the importance of flexible delivery models, particularly where curricular constraints or governance structures pose challenges. In Bulgaria, despite legal and political barriers, the toolkit still offered students and educators a safe and creative space to reflect on identity, representation and social values.

Across all contexts, the project benefitted from strong collaboration between schools, universities and civil society actors, reinforcing the importance of cross-sector partnerships. Teachers and students responded positively to the focus on storytelling, audiovisual production, and critical media analysis, and the toolkit's emphasis on student voice proved to be one of its greatest strengths.

For policymakers, GEMINI offers a practical and tested approach to implementing the objectives of the EU Gender Equality Strategy, the European Education Area and the Digital Education Action Plan. Embedding the toolkit in teacher training, investing in digital resources and infrastructure, and supporting inclusive educational spaces are key steps for scaling the initiative. At the same time, GEMINI's creative and participatory methods make it ideally suited for use in informal and non-formal learning environments, including community centres, arts programmes and youth organisations.

GEMINI shows that with the right tools and support, students can actively shape how gender and diversity are represented in the media. As the EU continues to prioritise equality and digital competence in education, programmes like GEMINI can play a vital role in building a more inclusive and reflective learning culture across Europe.