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## Understanding Young Adults' Perception and Detecting Teachers' and Trainers' Awareness

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# UNDERSTANDING YOUNG ADULTS' PERCEPTION AND DETECTING TEACHERS' AND TRAINERS' AWARENESS

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the GEMINI audience research among European young adults and secondary school teachers/trainers, conducted as part of the WP3 activities in the 4 European countries involved in the project: Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and Romania.

The analysis of the main findings follows the structure established during the research design phase, which employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative methods (focus groups and in-depth interviews) and quantitative one (multilingual transnational survey). The findings provide valuable data and analysis to understand and measure *whether* and *how* young European 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.

Section 2 details the common methodology employed across the 4 countries to conduct focus group sessions with European high school students and presents the main findings from each country. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of young adults' consumption of serial dramas and their interest in gender-related issues. While highlighting common trends in consumption habits and widespread interest in gender issues among the European young adults, a comparative analysis of the main findings revealed a diverse perceived influence of serial dramas, often mediated by socio-cultural factors different to each country.

Section 3 reports on the main findings of the in-depth interviews carried out with European high school teachers in the 4 countries, with the aim of gaining an in-depth knowledge of the way they work with students on gender issues, which is a core element for the future development of innovative teaching methods. Against a widespread interest in gender issues and an open attitude towards the use of serial dramas as a teaching tool, the teachers' perspective puts the spotlight on the main challenges they have to face, ranging from socio-cultural resistance – mainly from students' parents – to institutional issues, such as varying copyright regulations and the availability of technical infrastructure.

Section 4 focuses on the results of the quantitative phase of the audience research, analysing the data from the trans-national survey from a comparative perspective. The main findings provide insights into the level of awareness and interest among high school students in gender and diversity issues from an intersectional perspective. They also highlight the perceived dual nature of serial dramas, which are seen as powerful tools both for perpetuating gender stereotypes and for suggesting inclusive models of society, and whose influence is perceived by EU young adults mainly on an emotional level.

Overall, the results of this report establish a strategic link between the research phase and the subsequent training and pilot phases of the project. They also offer valuable insights into integrating serial dramas and gender issues into high school teaching, while considering the similarities and differences observed across the 4 countries.

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## Introduction

In the broader context of the GEMINI project, the audience research on European young adults and high school teachers/trainers – carried out as part of WP3 activities – is of paramount importance: it serves as a symbolic and strategic link between the analysis of gender representations in serial dramas (the focus of Deliverable 3.1), and the subsequent training and pilot phases planned in WP4.

Before presenting the research results, it is necessary to briefly outline the theoretical background and explain the research design and its stages.

### 1.1. The theoretical background

The theoretical background of the research refers to audience studies (Hall, 1980; Morley, 1980; Ang, 1991; Livingstone, 2003), which represent a multidisciplinary field within media and communication research. This field focuses on understanding how individuals engage with and interpret media content, ranging from traditional television and radio to digital platforms and social media. Therefore, audience studies aim to unravel the complex dynamics between media texts, audiences, and the broader socio-cultural contexts in which media consumption occurs. This suggests that media products play a pivotal role in shaping societal perceptions, constructing realities, and fuelling imaginations through their narratives, characters, and themes (Fiske, 1987; Hartley, 2002; Couldry, 2003; Mittel, 2015). From this perspective, audience studies are closely connected with the wider sociological framework originating from the symbolic work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) on the social construction of reality.

Key themes explored in audience studies include:

- a. Media effects research, which investigates how media exposure influences attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours among audiences.
- b. Reception theories, which examine how audiences actively interpret and negotiate meanings embedded in media texts, considering factors like cultural background, identity, and social context.
- c. Audience segmentation, which involves categorizing audiences based on demographic, psychographic, or behavioural characteristics. This is done to understand variations in media consumption preferences and responses, and to inform media producers and marketers in tailoring content and strategies to specific audience segments, enhancing audience engagement and satisfaction.

Throughout their long history, audience studies have examined several media products (journalism, entertainment, political communication, advertising, etc.), including serial dramas. Specifically, audience studies on serial drama have focused on:

- a. Analysing the motivations that drive people to watch specific serial drama, including elements such as plot, characters, genre, and theme.
- b. Examining how audiences consume serial dramas, whether through traditional TV, online streaming platforms, or other forms of consumption.

- c. Exploring the impact of serial dramas on their audiences, including themes like identification with characters, emotional impact, and reflection on social and cultural issues.
- d. Evaluating the audiences' response to marketing and promotion strategies for serial drama, including advertising campaigns, special events, and interactions on social media.

The evolution of digital media – and the transition from the network society (van Dijk, 1991; Castells, 1996) to connective society (Boccia Artieri, 2012) and platform society (van Dijck *et al.*, 2019) – has significantly impacted audience studies, introducing new dimensions such as participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), user-generated content (Bruns, 2008; Jenkins *et al.*, 2013), and algorithmic recommendation systems (Pariser, 2011; Seyfert & Roberge, 2016). These developments have broadened the scope of audience studies to include the dynamics of online communities, digital storytelling practices, and the impact of personalized content delivery on audience engagement and media consumption behaviours.

Similarly, the digital revolution has reinforced the transformation of audiences, a concept cultural studies had already recognized as plural, by substituting the singular concept of “audience” with “publics”. Furthermore, the new hybrid digital mediascapes (Chadwick, 2013) have fostered the rise of new typologies of publics, such as:

- a. The *networked publics*, that is publics formed through digital connectivity, which interact across various platforms, creating a network of shared interests and information. According to dana boyd (2014), these groups are characterized by their ability to mobilize quickly, spread information widely, and influence public discourse.
- b. The *affective publics*, that is publics driven by emotions. According to Papacharissi (2014), these publics leverage the rapid spread of emotional responses facilitated by social media platforms, turning individual sentiments into collective action. They often emerge around shared feelings, such as outrage or solidarity, and can significantly impact social and political landscapes.

Both networked and affective publics demonstrate the power of digital connectivity in shaping modern media landscapes, highlighting the shift from passive consumption to active participation and emotional engagement.

In conclusion, audience studies provide a highly effective critical lens for analysing the complex interplay between media texts, audiences, and societal contexts. By examining how individuals perceive, interpret, and engage with popular forms of entertainment, audience studies enhance the understanding of media's role in shaping identities, influencing public discourse, and reflecting cultural norms and values in contemporary societies.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that audience studies are not merely theoretical constructs. Indeed, they are distinguished by a market empirical approach, which blends qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate audience behaviours, preferences, interpretations, and the social implications of media consumption. Specifically, qualitative approaches delve into the subjective experiences of media users, uncovering their motivations, perceptions, and the meanings they attribute to media content. Conversely, quantitative methods offer broader insights into audience demographics, consumption patterns, and the prevalence of particular media contents across different audience segments.



## 1.2. The research design

Referring to this theoretical framework, the GEMINI audience research employs a mixed method approach (Cresswell, 2015) to analyse the interplay between gender-related issues and serial drama. The aim is to understand *whether* and *how* European young adults perceive, interpret and engage with the representation of gender-related issues provided by serial drama.

Before introducing the different steps of the research design, it is necessary to briefly explain the main features and advantages of the quoted “mixed methods approach”, to help readers understand why it was chosen within the wider methodological scenario.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), mixed methods research capitalizes on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches while mitigating their respective limitations. Qualitative methods – such as focus groups, interviews, ethnographic observations, and textual analysis – provide rich, in-depth insights into participants’ experiences, attitudes, and behaviours. They are particularly valuable for exploring complex social phenomena, understanding context-specific issues, and uncovering underlying motivations and perceptions. On the other hand, quantitative methods, such as structured surveys, allow researchers to generalize findings to larger populations, establish statistical relationships, and quantify trends and patterns.

Therefore, by combining qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study, the mixed methods approach allows researchers to triangulate data sources, validate findings across different methodologies, and gain a more comprehensive understanding of research questions than would be possible with either method alone (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Based on these premises, the GEMINI research was structured in two phases:

- a. Qualitative phase, aimed at mapping European young adults’ consumption of serial dramas and their interest in gender-related issues; and at detecting teachers and trainers’ awareness of European young adults’ perception of gender-related issues. To achieve these goals, two different research methods were employed:
  - focus groups with high school students: this method involves small, interactive discussions facilitated by a moderator to gather different viewpoints and generate rich qualitative data. Each focus group session explores key themes and issues through open-ended questions, encouraging participants to share their perspectives and engage in group discussions that may uncover collective norms or consensus on certain topics (Krueger & Casey, 2015);
  - in-depth interviews with high school’s teachers and trainers: using a conversational tone that fosters rapport and encourages participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences, this method delves deeper into personal experiences, nuanced opinions, and unique perspectives that may not emerge in group settings (Seidman, 2013).
- b. Quantitative phase, aimed at measuring the influence of serial dramas on European young adults’ perception of gender-related issues. To achieve this goal, a structured survey was administered. Designed based on the insights gained from focus groups, the survey includes closed-ended questions with Likert scales, multiple-choice items, and demographic information, as well as open-ended questions to empower respondents to suggest effective examples of gender stereotypes or inclusive models of society, as presented in serial dramas.

## Mapping young adults' consumption of serial dramas and their interest in gender-related issues

### 2.1. Aims, methods and data collection

As outlined in the introduction, the GEMINI project includes a diversified set of empirical research activities, starting from focus groups with high school students from the four European countries involved in WP3. The focus groups aim to gain a deeper knowledge of young adults' consumption of serial dramas and their interest in gender-related issues.

The decision to begin the research path by employing this qualitative analysis tool was mainly driven by its twofold function: firstly, the main findings from focus groups contributed to identifying the corpus of serial dramas to be analysed as part of Task 3.3 (*Mapping young adults' consumption of serial dramas and their interest in gender-related issues*), which merged into D3.1 (*Understanding young adults and gender equality through serial drama*). Secondly, focus groups also served an exploratory role in designing the multilingual survey envisaged in T3.4 (*Measuring the influence of serial dramas on young adults' perception of gender-related issues*), the results of which will be set out in the following section 4.

From a methodological standpoint, the focus group research tool offers a balance between the active role required of the researcher in exploring the issues under study and engaging participants (Losito, 2004; Acocella & Cataldi, 2021), and the need to respect a rigorous methodological approach to ensure the scientific integrity of the research (Morgan & Spanish, 1984; Babbie, 2013). In fact, as noted by Stewart and Shamdasani (2014), focus groups aim at:

- a. Understanding, rather than inferring.
- b. Determining the range rather than generalizing.
- c. Providing insights into how individuals perceive a situation rather than making statements about the entire population.

Following these methodological guidelines, the partners involved in this research activity collaborated on the development of a shared "Focus Group Protocol" (Milestone 5), which also outlined instructions for conducting focus groups. This protocol included questions and topics organized into three main sections designed to explore:

- a. Young adults' consumption of serial dramas.
- b. Young adults' approach to gender-related issues.
- c. Young adults' perceptions of the relationship between serial dramas and gender-related issues in terms of positive drivers of social change or negative feeder of gender stereotypes.

Due to the outspoken heterogeneity of the students interviewed in the different countries, qualitative analysis provided flexibility for each partner to adapt a common protocol to specific contexts and target groups. Consequently, discussions with high school students varied: some countries employed a more traditional approach, while others used ice-breaking visual tools (images or clips from serial dramas) to introduce or stimulate discussion. These methodological choices were detailed in the analysis of results presented in the respective local reports.

While partners agreed to conduct a minimum of 3 focus groups per country, some partners opted to increase this number to capture the breadth of contextual diversity and enhance the quality of the insights gained from student interviews. As a result, a total of 15 focus groups were carried

out: 3 each in Ireland and Romania, 4 in Italy, and 5 in Denmark, involving a total of 190 students across the four countries.

While achieving complete generalization was not feasible, the qualitative approach of focus group interviews and the number of student participants allowed each partner to strive for a degree of representativeness in participant selection. This included considerations of gender identity and geographical distribution, including – where applicable – distinctions between urban centres and suburbs. Detailed composition of each focus group in relation to these criteria are outlined at the beginning of each local report.

For the purpose of subsequent data analysis, student interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and strict anonymity measures were observed at every stage of data collection and processing, aligning with Child Protection Policies adopted by each academic partner as part of D1.1 (*Child Protection Policy*).

As T3.2 task leader, LCU shared with all partners the key steps for focus group analysis, advocating for full transcription of the recorded interviews, and providing a standardized output matrix (Mariani & Zenga, 2021) for collaborative data analysis. Aligned with the three sections delineated in the focus group protocol, this analytical matrix, fulfilled on the basis of uniform instructions, served as foundational tool for each partner to synthesise the main findings of their focus groups. This approach enabled partners to pursue a common thematic path, while highlighting specific local features in their respective reports.

## 2.2. Teen dramas and gender(s): main findings

Overall, the 15 focus groups carried out revealed some common trends in the consumption habits of serial dramas among European young adults. A notable interest in transmediality and second-screen practices (Scolari, 2009; Jenkins *et al.*, 2016) emerged as a shared feature across the 4 countries, with social media serving as the primary point of contact for engaging with serial dramas.

Interest in gender-related issues was widespread among European high school students, who generally exhibited inclusive and liberal attitudes. However, some students – especially in Ireland and Romania – disclosed a lack of in-depth knowledge about the subject, partly due to their insufficient coverage in school curricula. Concerning gender inequality, respondents mainly held negative attitudes toward discrimination based on sexual orientation. In Italy, there was also strong concern regarding unequal rights between men and women, particularly regarding the gender pay gap.

Concerning their influence on young adults, serial dramas were generally perceived to have a limited impact on gender-related issues, tending more towards reinforcing existing views rather than fostering change (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). While this perspective was prevalent overall, Italian young adults emphasized that the influence of serial dramas is mediated by socio-cultural factors. In contrast, Danish students showed greater openness toward series that lack a strong educational agenda, preferring those that more likely “normalise” the idea of diversity.

### 2.3. The Danish young adults' perspective

In Denmark, 5 focus groups were conducted between August and November 2023 with 50 17-21-year-old students from the second and third year of high school.

In order to reach the greatest possible level of representativity and diversity, a number of criteria were used to cast the focus groups: gender (17 men, 30 women, 3 non-binary), centre-periphery (1 peripheral high school, 3 in two different larger cities, and 1 capital high school), and school typology (1 high school of commerce and 4 general high schools, including 1 very progressive one). Three focus groups were conducted with 10 students, while the two others involved 9 and 11 students, respectively.

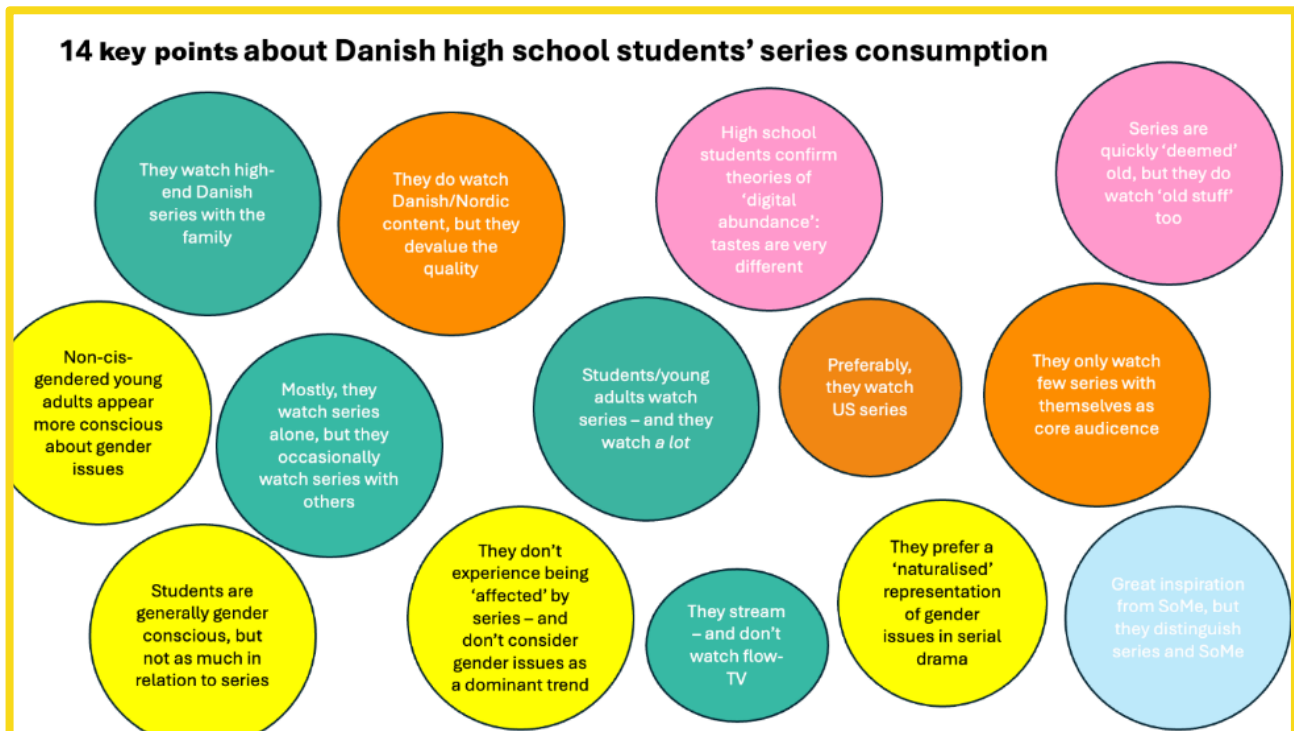
As an introduction to each focus group interview, we used an icebreaker exercise, where the students used cue cards to range 10 serial dramas from best to worst. We did this to get them primed into talking about serial drama and to get a sense of whether they watch serial dramas produced specifically for them as a target audience. The series chosen for the cue cards all involved narratives that in some ways focus on gender-related issues.



**[Image 1]** This image was one among ten cue cards used as an icebreaker exercise in the Danish focus groups, in this case the visuals for online distribution of the Danish series *Doggystyle* (DR 2018-22).

### 2.3.1. Danish young adults and serial dramas

The Danish focus groups confirm several existing theories about and trends among young adult viewers (cf. Jensen *et al.*, 2021). Image 2 highlights 14 perspectives gained from the Danish focus groups.



**[Image 2]** 14 specific and illustrative points about high Danish school students' interest in serial drama and gender-related issues.

The following sections cross through all insights that showcase Danish high school students to be similar to Danish young adults in general.

For this generation, linear television has been left behind as they have completely turned to predominantly international streaming services, even illegal ones («*Then there are streaming services [everybody nods]. It's never channels, linear TV*»). Their preference is US content, and the Netflix platform is the dominant go-to-source for entertainment, but they do know – or at least know of – local Danish content, although they do not appear to have a wider interest in the material produced specifically for them as a core audience («*Danish series are good, but I don't always feel that they have that high a level*»). However, the focus groups indicate that they watch local serial drama with families («*When I watch series with people, it's actually because it's with my parents, and then it's Danish series*»), and they do have knowledge about dominant series from Danish media providers such as DR (cf. Esser *et al.*, 2023).

While they do devalue local content in comparison with especially US content, the focus groups show that they watch more local content than they 'admit' at first glance, e.g. the Danish series *Rita* (TV2 2012-20) pops up unprompted in 4/5 focus groups as a series that many have watched

(«Well, Rita is really such a banger. [...] I hope that no one in here hasn't seen Rita, because that series is fantastic»). Judging from the plethora of titles mentioned during focus groups (among which most were series in English, mostly US content), the students also confirm existing theories of “digital abundance” and “attention scarcity” (Doyle & Roda, 2019): their favourite series are surprisingly varied, and they often ‘shop around’ between different offers if they are not hooked from the start («I have four series I have yet to finish watching. Five! »). In addition to this, there is a noteworthy inspirational relation between social media and serial drama, but they refrain from watching series through social media, which indicates that the SKAM transmedia distribution model is now less attractive («I've tried many times on TikTok, where a random clip from some series comes up, and then I think: “Okay! That looks exciting!”, and then I watch it [through another platform]»).

Regarding influence from serial drama, many respondents stress that they do not feel affected by series:

«I know it's not real, it's just something that's set up, so it [serial drama] doesn't affect me in any way. Something has to happen in reality for it to affect me. I can't be influenced by a series, I can't [...] I know it's not real»

«Well, for me, I think it could happen [to be influenced by a serial drama], I just haven't seen anything that has done it yet»

«I don't think I would say that it [my attitude] will be changed, but I think that the fact that you have something to reflect on, but I don't think it changes anything as such»

However, judging from the respondents' overall sense of quality and approaches to the topics of some series, some series clearly motivate discussions and reactions from the students, which indicates that they are somehow influenced by what they watch. For instance, the US series *Euphoria* (HBO 2019-) appears to have motivated a dominant reaction («at any rate, it has broadened my horizons when it comes to that topic [drug abuse]»).

### 2.3.2. Comparing views about gender-related issues

*Euphoria* also works as a great bridge into gender-related issues. For the Danish students, this series appears to have been a gamechanger in its indirect focus on gender («For example, in *Euphoria*, they do youth themes, and I think it's cool that there's someone who is transgender, where she's not standing with a sign over her head saying: “I am transgender!”»). Many students depart from a similar attitude to gender-related issues outside of drama where most appear increasingly liberal and tolerant. Opinions range from the critical, yet tolerant («It [gender-related issues] is so fucking complicated sometimes, I hate it. That you can't just think fuck it, it doesn't matter if the person is this, that or the other. You do you, I do me») to a wider compassionate approach («For me at least, the only reason for me to show an interest in it, read about it, devote myself to it, whatever, is more of an intent to not offend someone»). It does not necessarily appear to be easy:

«I sometimes think that it's almost hard to keep up with, because it started with just LGBT, and then Q was added and then +, you know, it may quickly get loaded, and it's hard to keep up with how much you can identify yourself with»

So, while respondents that openly identify with personalities involved in LGBTQ+ communities appear to have stronger views on matters in relation to gender equality, there seems to be very little evidence in the Danish focus groups for conservative views regarding gender. Rather, some acknowledge the role of educational institutions («But you can at least start with education, and

then it will come over time. It may be that opinions have changed, but I definitely think you have to start with education»). Several students even highlight how they also become “educators” regarding a more liberal stance on genders in Danish society, including their own families:

«In terms of equality between men and women, me and my mother are very much in agreement, but if you start a gender debate and broaden it a bit, so that it also includes non-binary and transgender people, we start to disagree a lot»

«I also feel that sometimes you have to act as a kind of educator [towards your parents]»

In their personal views, respondents themselves appear to accept different gender identities, but this does not necessarily mean that they regard gender equality in society as an accomplished fact (e.g., «I feel that on some points we are very progressive in our equality, and on other points we are still behind, for example with salaries» and «It may well be that on paper there should be equality, but society hasn't kept up»). In other words, formal gender equality may exist, but cultural gender equality does not, according to many students.



**[Image 3]** For the high school students, the character Jules from the HBO series *Euphoria* is regarded as a good example of a normalised integration of a transgendered character without specifically addressing this as an issue.

### 2.3.3. Serial dramas and gender-related issues: who influences what?

If we accept the fact that young adults are, in fact, influenced by what they watch, just like we see from the teacher interviews, specific tastes appear in the focus groups regarding *how* it may be possible to influence young audiences in high schools. Many students react to serial dramas that approach specific gender topics from a pedagogical or too mechanical perspective («I think that really good series can provide new perspectives. At least newer series that kind of deal with it in

a very nuanced way»). In the 1990s, the Danish children’s literature researcher Torben Weinreich (1994) pointed out that children were approached patronizingly on different topics, and that children’s literature were “downward slanting” (translation of the Danish book title) in approaching the audience. Something similar appears to be happening in how students experience gender-related issues in serial drama (cf. the “shove it down your throat” argument below):

«I feel that in most series there must be homosexuals in a way that makes it: oh, we need a homosexual in a film, and they get positioned like to the stupid one that needs to make a lot of noise»

«There’s always that thing: if there’s a female lead, she always has to be badass, she’s only into the masculine stuff, half shaved head [...] yeah, they give masculine traits to a woman, that’s how I feel. You never get to show the other sides of yourself. I mean, a woman can be strong, even if she’s very emotionally driven»

«I think that series like that don’t try to shove it down your throat, but gets one thinking about such, just rather quickly, just to get hints in your head, maybe also yourself, that you may say that it blooms a bit that thought»

«I would also say that you have to put it [gender] in the plot. The reason I like Euphoria is because they normalise it. I would say that there’s a difference between being completely confronted with it, ‘boom’, you have to think about this, or it’s just kind of like we’re doing this, and it’s this universe, it has to be normal»

Students react negatively to too direct approaches to gender-related issues in serial drama, and they appear to react positively to series that “normalise” different gender identities, e.g. the “uncommented” transgendered character Jules in *Euphoria*. This approach to narrated gender equality reverts to the point made above, that Danish high school students generally appear quite liberal in their approaches to gender identities, and that they – from a more theoretical perspective – by wish for a turn towards what we, with a term from Roland Barthes (1964), would dub *naturalisation* of gender identities. It is not pedagogical or political approaches through serial drama that may influence matters positively, but rather naturalised, normalised portrayals of people with different gender identities.

## 2.4. The Irish young adults’ perspective

The 3 focus groups carried out in Ireland between October and December 2023 involved a total of 28 Irish-based 15/16-year-old Transition Year<sup>1</sup> high school (known in Ireland as secondary school) students. There was an effort made to ensure the focus groups were as representative and diverse as possible in terms of gender (10 boys; 19 girls) and geographical location (both (sub-urban and rural). The first focus group was conducted with 7 students in a DEIS (disadvantaged) community school in a town on the country’s eastern seaboard. Focus group two was the largest with 14 students and took place in another community school, this time with a more mixed socio-economic demographic, in a small town in the north midlands. The final focus group was conducted in a comprehensive school within an affluent neighbourhood in the Dublin suburbs.

<sup>1</sup> Transition Year is a non-exam year that acts as a bridge between the Junior and Senior Cycle.



### 2.4.1. Irish young adults and serial dramas

The focus groups revealed that Irish young people enjoy watching serial drama and do so quite frequently. Moreover, students identified watching a variety of genres, the most popular genre being comedy. In addition, and probably unsurprisingly, the focus group participants expressed a preference for watching TV shows on streaming services, such as Netflix, rather than on Irish linear television. There was also a notable cohort of students who admitted to illegally downloading/streaming serial dramas, including via the use of a “dodgy box”.

The social media platform TikTok was identified as one of the main sources where young people get inspiration about what to watch; this was particularly memorable for them in relation to the show *Squid Game*. The participants also discussed other ways in which they make and receive serial dramas' recommendations:

«I just scroll through Netflix and if anything looks interesting. I could watch it or read the [recommendations]»

«Usually, if one person starts talking about a show then everyone does, and it convinces you to watch it»

They also described the social aspects of watching serial dramas, which mostly involve offline interactions:

«If I know that a friend is watching the same show as me, I would talk to them about it... but never on social media»

«I would talk about it [a TV show] with my friends but not online»

While there is a social dimension to watching serial dramas, as outlined above, the preference amongst Irish young people, is to watch TV alone, sometimes exclusively. However, most of the students interviewed also spent at least some time watching serial dramas with other family members and sometimes with friends. Irish teens were reluctant to admit watching soap operas, particularly Irish ones, but the soaps, at times, served as a ritualistic bonding experience particularly between grandmothers and granddaughters.

Further, certain non-normative viewing rituals were also discussed by the participants, such as texting, doing homework or even cooking while watching a series: «I watch my shows on Netflix on 1.5 speed... and it has to have subtitles on». Moreover, young people were, on the whole, not phased by the prospect of watching a subtitled foreign language drama but drew the line at dubbing «it would just annoy me». In addition, some viewing practices emerged during the various Covid lockdowns, when socialising in person was restricted:

«We had a group chat... and we'd all start at the same time, and we'd watch... the episode... and that's how I found *Modern Family*»

While some of the viewing habits outlined above are likely to be more common to this generation of digital natives, others have cross-generational appeal:

«If there's actors I really like in shows I'd probably watch something else with them in it»

«[Fear of spoilers] forced me to watch [the last episode of season 2 of the *Mandalorian*]»

Furthermore, as evidenced by some of the quotes above, with a few exceptions, most notably *Derry Girls*, *Young Offenders* and *Normal People*, Irish teenagers expressed a preference for US serial dramas. Somewhat surprisingly, the most-watched show across all three focus groups was the US sitcom *Friends* (NBC 1994-2004), which is now streamed via Netflix. In addition, they did not differentiate shows that were aimed at a teen audience or adult series, as their viewing habits traverse both.

### 2.4.2. Comparing views about gender-related issues

Similar to the limited nature of media literacy education in Ireland, gender-related issues are not taught comprehensively or consistently enough in the Irish classroom either. Consequently, the knowledge young people possess on these topics and their confidence to speak about them is lacking:

«Not so much [discussion happens regarding gender-related issues] in school but you see a lot of talk online»

It was obvious that most focus group participants did not have the vocabulary to discuss the nuances and complexities of gender-related issues, including gender identities, sexualities, consent and gender inequalities:

«There's male and female and a load of other ones»

«[Another gender identity is] non-binary»

«Personally, it doesn't affect me... so I don't think of it as a problem I need to fix»

Others were more versed in the language of gender and sexuality:

«I consider [gender] to be a spectrum»

In addition, while some young people were aware of gender inequalities, including in Ireland («[Irish society] is probably [equal] in the eyes of the law... but it's more social prejudice»), others considered them to be a concern that was not relevant to the Irish context:

«Recently, I've read a lot about all the new anti-trans laws coming into place in the US»

Discussions with family members as well as the influence of online culture mean that despite the paucity of gender education in school, they are encountering these topics, albeit often in an unregulated and inconsistent way:

«[I learn about gender-related issues] mostly on TikTok and Instagram»

«The more you interact with [online petitions about gender-related issues], the more you're exposed to it»

«I'd have arguments with my family about it»

«[Where my mom works] she has conversations about LGBT representation and she's trying to educate herself and she has conversations with me about what she's learned»

When prompted to provide examples of a lack of gender equality in their own lives and communities, they were more likely to engage in the discussion, citing examples such as a lack of sports teams at school for girls («in sport boys would get more opportunities and favouritism») or gendered language being used by school staff.

### 2.4.3. Serial dramas and gender-related issues: who influences what?

For the most part the focus group participants did not recognise serial drama as a source of influence in their lives and struggled to identify ways in which these series could impact on social or cultural factors. However, they cited some examples of how shows inspire fashion trends, including cosplaying as characters from popular shows:

«Dressing up as characters and putting on the *Euphoria* make-up when *Euphoria* was really popular»

«If a show got insanely popular...people start saying references or they start doing stuff like in their day-to-day lives, with their friends...you might start wearing costumes or cosplay»

However, a small number of participants acknowledged the pedagogical role of serial dramas and their potential to have a broader societal impact:

«They [serial dramas] can make people realise that something isn't quite right»

«There's social commentary sometimes [in serial dramas]»

«It [social commentary in series] can cause dominoes to fall and cause people to protest and to riot»

While the young people in the focus groups watched a variety of genres of serial drama from the 1990s to the present, set in different countries but mostly Ireland, the UK and the US, they were critical of what they deemed to be inauthentic representations of young people:

«[When older actors play teens, it can be] very annoying [because] they're not actually our age group but we're being compared to them»

«*Riverdale* [is unrealistic as it has] 32-year-old actors playing teens»

«It worked with *Derry Girls* where they got them dressed up to look like the [right] age»

Moreover, in relation to gender representation in serial dramas, they were adept at identifying stereotypical tropes and attempts to play with or subvert them:

«There's no girl characters in [*Breaking Bad*]... in the later seasons Skyler becomes more complex but she's still treated as a joke [by fans of the show]»

«In *Good Omens* it's a play with it [gender stereotypes]»

Overall, the participants recognized the importance of diverse and non-stereotypical representation of gender and sexuality:

«If you're watching something, and one character is... queuing up to be a stereotype, it's kind of hard to relate to the character»

They were also able to identify positive, diverse and realistic diverse gender representation in TV series:

«A lot of [*Anne With An E*] it's about, you know, growing up, and she's quite a feminist herself. So she's trying to challenge those stereotypes»

However, the young people were forgiving of problematic gender representation in older shows, such as *Friends* and even in series from as recent as the 2010s:

«*Modern Family* was made like 2010... so it's kind of hard to view things in a modern lens»

Finally, the focus group participants saw value in centring young people as media content creators or even as consultants, as the GEMINI project proposes to do, in the development of serial dramas aimed at or featuring teenagers to create shows that are more diverse, inclusive and realistic.

## 2.5. The Italian young adults' perspective

The four focus groups carried out in Italy between September and October 2023 involved a total of 66 Italian students. Although no systematic statistical sampling was required, an attempt was made to ensure maximum heterogeneity in the selection of participants<sup>2</sup>, both in terms of gender identity (36 female; 30 male) and geographical representativeness by involving students from schools in the four geographical areas into which Italy is divided – North-East (13), North-West (14),

<sup>2</sup> The attempt to ensure such representativeness, although crucial from a methodological point of view, did not, however, lead to a marked differentiation of the research results, reflecting a considerable homogeneity of young adults' perceptions regarding the research topic. On the contrary, interesting elements of differentiation emerged during the interviews with teachers, which not only contributed to providing a different generational perspective, but also to highlight the peculiar attitudes and behaviors emerging in the different school contexts.

Centre (23), South and Islands (16), while also taking into account the geographical location of the schools: city centre (40) vs. peripheries (26)<sup>3</sup>.

### 2.5.1. Italian young adults and serial dramas

With regard to consumption practices, students' thoughts reflect the distinguishing features of the so-called "Netflix Generation" (Matrix 2014), identifying the freedom of choice as an identity value, reflected both in the choice of content to watch and in the ways of experiencing it.

Looking at the platforms most used to watch serial dramas, Netflix still has an unchallenged dominance, both because of its extensive catalogue («*Definitely Netflix! You can find everything there*») and of a more general standardisation of consumption habits, such as «*you can't not have Netflix*». Nevertheless, this platform is seen mainly as an "arrival point", where the starting point is increasingly embodied by social media, notably Instagram and Tik Tok, representing a kind of portal through which students access the content of serial dramas:

«I find new series to watch on social media. I go to Tik Tok, I save them and then maybe I find it there and watch it. On social media you can find clips, or trailers, or even users recommending stories... I see if I like the trailer, and then I go and watch the series»

In terms of viewing habits, the most remarkable feature is the non-linear way in which Italian students say they watch serial dramas, tailored to their own tastes, times and needs, with second screen practices playing an increasingly important role:

«As I have a rather hectic life and little time, but a great passion for films and TV series, I watch things at "2x" speed. There are so many topics these days, and I am an extremely curious person, so I speed up»

«I watch some series in a very little time. Or, in some cases, I stop watching them and then (even after a year) I watch them again. It depends, because I'm used to start watching many series at the same time»

In terms of content, the most frequently quoted serial dramas include both national and international content. The most often mentioned national series is *Mare fuori*, followed by other series broadcast both on streaming platforms (from *Gomorra* to *Suburra*) and on linear TV (*Un Professore, I Medici*). A wider range of preferences is recorded on the international side, from the most transversal serial dramas (*Breaking Bad, How I Met Your Mother*) to those closer to the teenagers' world (*Gossip Girl, Euphoria, Heartstopper, Sex Education, Ginny & Georgia, Degrassi*). Turning to students' views on the representation and influence "power" exerted by serial dramas (regardless of gender-related issues), they are fairly unanimous in their opinion that serial dramas are able to represent their generation quite faithfully:

«I watched *Degrassi*, which represents a lot of different types of teenagers. I really enjoyed watching it, it's nice to see yourself on screen»

«Serial dramas make you think that what you are watching – especially if you can identify with the characters – is something interesting or enjoyable, or perhaps an important focus of your interest at that moment»

While emphasizing the power of serial dramas to influence their daily lives, to the extent that «*People act like one show, then another*», there are, nonetheless, those who highlight the

<sup>3</sup> The selection of the interviewees involved the historical network of schools belonging to the Permanent Observatory on Young People "Generazione Proteo", based at Link Campus University and directed by prof. Nicola Ferrigni, which have formally joined the GEMINI project (<http://osservatorioproteo.unilink.it>).

individual predisposition to be or not be influenced by the content of a series, which originate from the socio-cultural context of origin, but also from one's greater or lesser vulnerability:

«A lot depends on the person watching the series. A lot of TV shows have a meaning, but the viewer only sees what he or she wants to see – so sometimes they “romanticize” the meaning. Think of series that deal with toxic love, girls... especially little girls tend to romanticize it»

### 2.5.2. Comparing views about gender-related issues

The discussion with Italian young adults revealed a controversial definition of “gender equality”. Firstly, students are used to labelling this concept through a “conceptual” (or symbolic) dimension. The traditional understanding of diversity as a marker of exclusion is being challenged, reflecting a broader generational shift towards normalisation, wherein differences are increasingly embraced rather than marginalized:

«Diversity is perceived as something “out of the ordinary”, but for me nothing stands for diversity because I am open-minded. What our parents tell us is “different” isn't different for me; maybe my father, my grandfather think that a gay person is different, but for me it's anything but different»

The first association they make with gender-related issues is with the “diversity of sexual orientation”, which they approach with a twofold attitude: a) positive acceptance/inclusion in their own reality, where gender diversity is “normalised” and would not even be an issue worthy of such an articulated debate; b) intolerance and antagonism towards a socio-cultural context where their idea of “normalisation” is contradicted by a perceived “problematic” nature of these issues:

«Certainly, inclusiveness does not belong to everyone, also because there are people who are not inclined to be so inclusive, to let people live as they want to live, as long as they do not restrict the freedom of others»

Secondly, a “practical dimension” of gender equality emerges, which is primarily concerned with issues of women's unequal access to professional roles, and the related issues of gender pay gap, which is often reflected in the perception of an inequality in rights:

«Gender equality is both at work, in terms of equal rights and in other areas... If you had to find a synonym for the idea of gender equality? Maybe I would say: unequal pay! [...] Then it's obvious that it's not just an economic issue, even if you talk among young people there's always this habit of saying: “shut up, you're a woman, you have no rights”»

### 2.5.3. Serial dramas and gender-related issues: who influences what?

Looking more specifically at the relationship between serial dramas and gender-related issues, young adults' perceptions highlight the influence and representation processes that are both mirrored and complementary. In particular, they tend to split between:

- a) Those who emphasize an “inclusive representation” which needs to be transposed to the screen precisely with the aim of raising awareness and encouraging the public debate:

«Some series can help to feel safer if you think you have something strange. There are people who think they have strange or ugly body parts. And because this show [Sex Education] is very “forward”, there's a lot of nakedness, it normalizes even those who think they have something different»

- b) Those who emphasize a “forced representation” which runs the risk of over-idealizing social phenomena in which diversity must be staged at all costs, even at the expense of the storytelling:

«*Heartstopper* has managed to include as many characters as possible, but it can be a stretch. The LGBTQ+ community cannot all be represented in a show, also because it is a very diversified community»

- c) Those who emphasize a “limited representation” of the diversity of sexual orientations, which goes as far as the representation of transsexuality but not further than that, as if there were a line that cannot be crossed:

«There are homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals, and stop. I have never seen a character on TV series saying: “I am queer”. In fact, I think there’s a kind of social ladder. You have the gay people, then you don’t see the lesbians so much... So, first of all male homosexuality, then bisexuality, and then you almost never find anything, at most a transsexual»

Italian young adults are persuaded that the influence exerted by serial dramas may be stronger for younger and less educated people, since «*if you’re already a trained person, it doesn’t affect you. But for 13-year-old it’s different*».

However, the influence of serial dramas is recognised at a higher level, namely in terms of “social benefit”. This is particularly the case for those series which challenge the responsibility of schools and society in dealing with these issues:

«After the release of *Sex Education*, even on social media people started saying “let’s talk about sexuality in schools” and that’s a good thing. *Sex education* is needed in schools because a lot of people don’t know how to deal with their first sexual relationship. Okay, maybe they know they have to go to the gynaecologist, but they’re ashamed because they think it’s so much... and a lot of young people don’t protect themselves»

## 2.6. The Romanian young adults’ perspective

The Romanian results presented below are based on 3 focus groups conducted between October and December 2023 with students from three different high schools in Bucharest. The interviews involved a total of 44 students aged 15-18 (17 female and 27 male). Part of the students in our sample attended a theoretical high school, while others attended a technological high school, in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades<sup>4</sup>. The sample of the focus groups is diverse, but it is not representative for the Romanian high school students in general<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.6.1. Romanian young adults and serial dramas

With some of the best fixed and mobile internet connections in Europe (European Commission, 2022, p. 158), Romania offers its teenagers endless possibilities to access digital content, ranging from social media to streaming. As a result, all Romanian focus group participants indicated they predominantly watch serial dramas on streaming platforms like Netflix, HBO Max, and Disney+, while some also use movie sites and torrents (to access serial dramas everyone is talking about) and live television. Devices used range from PCs, tablets, and television screens, to smartphones, indicating a preference for convenience and accessibility. Choices of serial dramas are influenced by recommendations from family, friends, and social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, alongside streaming platforms algorithms:

<sup>4</sup> In Romania, high schools usually have classes from the ninth to the twelve grade.

<sup>5</sup> The research protocol for the focus groups was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Bucharest (Decision 30/ 08.03.2023).

«I usually watch something I know from the Internet [like an edit on Instagram, TikTok]»

Consumption varies from solitary viewing for focused attention to social watching for shared experiences. Some students prefer watching alone to avoid distractions, while others watch with friends or family for a sense of community or assistance in understanding complex plots.

«I watched *Breaking Bad* two times. The second time, a friend shared his screen, and we were watching together, and we were talking about it at the same time»

Teenagers in our focus groups say they use serial dramas as social prompts more than any other subjects. «We can discuss serial dramas for hours». As a result, they tend to watch similar titles across schools, ranging from the 1990s sitcom *Friends* to 2010s *Peaky Blinders* or to contemporary Marvel series. Boys are watching more crime-based series like *Breaking Bad* or *The Sopranos*, and girls are watching more drama and romance like *Bridgerton*, *Wednesday*, and *Gilmore Girls*. There's a tendency towards dramas with suspense and complex storylines. Age restrictions like +16 or +18 are not deterrents; rather, they are associated with more engaging content.

Viewing habits vary from binge-watching multiple episodes a day to watching sporadically, depending on the available amount of time. Some students use serial dramas as background noise while performing other tasks such as math homework. Still, many students get emotionally engaged in the plot of the serial dramas they follow to the point that they refuse to discuss about preferred serial dramas, to avoid conflicts:

«I like this [character, he said]. I did not agree with that opinion, and I took it quite personal, I got very upset, I said that such a thing is not possible and that I do not want to talk about this serial drama with that person [...]. I would rather watch it alone and I prefer to limit myself to my own personal opinion»

### 2.6.2. Comparing views about gender-related issues

Teenagers from the Romanian focus groups expressed a range of attitudes towards diversity and inclusion ranging from acceptance and advocacy for fundamental human rights, such as the right to privacy or the right to equal work and pay, to discomfort and adherence to traditional views. Their opinions are influenced by family and peers, cultural context, and personal experiences.

When asked about interest in gender-related issues, some students express limited knowledge but agree with fundamental principles like gender equality. They acknowledge the presence of these discussions on social platforms like TikTok and Instagram, showing that exposure to gender-related issues is often through informal, digital channels:

«I saw discussions on TikTok and Instagram, but I do not know much about this»

«I do not know much, but I agree with men and women having equal rights»

For other students, a background in formal discussions about gender-related issues in schools or at home is evident:

«It is a problem that should be addressed not only at the educational level, but also in each house, in each family, at political level, in serial dramas and in films. We should think about it more often»

Discussions during focus groups indicated that most students are aware of main gender-related issues, have an opinion, and share a sense of how close or far their point of view is from what is acceptable now. This ranges from awareness of international trends to what older generations think. For example, in one focus group one student said:

«There are roles in society. It does not mean that women should be in the kitchen, but it is just that men are physically stronger»

«Men are better», added his male classmate, before the discussion turned back to the point that no gender is better than the other, and one girl remarked:

«Because of all feminine revolts, we are now in the other extreme. Men are beneath us»

When the discussions reached the subject of same sex relationships, most views tended to express acceptance and asked for moderation:

«I'm not interested, but I have a lot of friends and acquaintances who are homophobic. I believe that everyone is born a certain way and that you can't choose your sexuality and who you like. As long as they are not exaggerated, and they don't demand too much attention for this matter. I mean, I consider them equal to us»

As Romania is «a Balkan country», gender equality is not discussed enough, students said, or it is a subject actively avoided by teenagers to not start a controversy with their older family members or with their peers.

### 2.6.3. Serial dramas and gender-related issues: who influences what?

From the Romanian focus group data, it is evident that serial dramas have a significant influence on their attitudes, even if this influence is not acknowledged as such. Some respondents look up to characters in serial dramas, especially strong female or male characters, for inspirational behaviour and style. This indicates that these shows may influence personal choices and behaviour, at least on the short term, particularly in how viewers interact with others or perceive themselves, which indicates a validation of the parasocial opinion leader hypothesis (cf. Giles, 2002):

«It's just for some girl characters, I like to take an example from them, if they are stronger, if I like how they dress or how they behave with some boys, with some girls» [female student]

«When I watch a series, especially those with mobsters, first of all I study their behaviour. I like to see how they communicate with other people, how they handle critical situations» [male student].

There is an emotional and an intellectual involvement in serial dramas, for entertainment, personal actualization, or support in social interactions. Some students acknowledge that serial drama may influence their opinions, not in the sense of a radical change of mind, but in the sense of the consolidation of a specific tendency. «They make me meditate on my former ideas», said one participant in the focus group; «I agreed in principle with gender equality, in the past, but this serial drama I was talking about made me believe we should fight for this thing and make [gender equality] possible», explained another how fictional story lines influence opinion formation.

High school students comprehend that the film industry presents an artificial, simplified world:

«I think it is impossible to make a film with no stereotypes»

«In serial dramas, things are too simple. They do not happen like that in real life»

In discussions about gender equality in serial dramas, students in our focus groups showed a preference for good story lines in which different gender representations and gender relationships are not exaggerated to make a point. «I find films that are trying to be politically correct irritating», one focus group participant said. «It is all about how the story is built and how well it is played», a participant in another focus group concluded the discussion about balanced representation of genders and minorities.



## Detecting teachers and trainers' awareness of young adults' perception of gender-related issues

### 3.1. Aims, methods and data collection

For the GEMINI project, understanding the way teachers work with students in high school, on gender-related issues, is a core element for the future development of innovative teaching instruments. To reach this aim, we conducted 42 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers and trainers in Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Romania. The interviews gathered information:

- a. On teacher-student interaction.
- b. On what works and what does not work in teaching gender equality, and why.
- c. On available logistics and attitudes towards serial dramas, to see if they have the potential to be adopted easily as teaching instruments in classrooms, in all countries.

To reach a saturation-point in each country and across the multinational sample we followed a widely accepted protocol for semi-structured interviews (cf. Guest, Arwen, & Johnson, 2006). This protocol indicates interviewing a similar group of people and using the same questions, about processes and circumstances they have a deep knowledge and understanding about, to gather comparable and relevant data. We used the same questionnaire in all four countries, with a similar group of individuals, to allow for comparison and identification of trends. The interview protocol (Milestone 7), was based, in part, on information gathered during the above-mentioned focus groups with high school students; it was approved by the Commission of Research Ethics at the University of Bucharest, Decision 30/ 08.03.2023, Amendment 1 no. 110 / 06.12.2023.

Guest, Arwen, and Johnson (2006) show that for the general information on a given subject, the saturation-point, where no new data or new variation appears, is reached at six interviews, while for more details, the saturation point is reached at 12 interviews. During the focus groups with high school students, we discovered that young adults identify a generational gap related to gender equality and sexuality issues, when talking about their parents and older relatives. Based on this information, we decided to aim for a sample of 12 interviewees in each country and to divide each national sample into two categories, with six teachers or trainers under 40 and six over 40 years old. Our hypothesis was that younger and older people have different patterns of media usage and different attitudes about gender equality. We also aimed for a mix of declared gender, school typology and regional representation.

During the interviews, we discovered that the teachers' samples are rather homogeneous. For example, in Romania, the differences between teachers and trainers below 40 and those above 40 were related to access to training (older generations received some training in the past, while the younger generation had no access to training). The rest of the answers were similar, with little or no variation across the sample. As a result, in three out of the four countries, sampling stopped at 10 interviewees.

The resulting sample has 18 teachers under 40 and 24 over 40 years old. Based on the declared gender, 31 of the teachers are female, 10 are male and one is nonbinary. All interviews were anonymised. To identify the respondents, we used a standardised annotation, for gender

(F/M/NB), interview number in each country (1 to 12), age group (under/over 40) and country code (DK/IE/IT/RO).

The selection of teachers and trainers that answered our interview requests was based on a nonprobability, volunteer sampling, that bears a selection bias (Agresti, 2018, pp. 30-31). It is highly probable that teachers with a more traditional approach to gender equality and with limited or no consumption of serial dramas avoided our call for interviews. Despite our efforts to provide a diverse sampling, based on age, years of experience, gender, school typology and region, we do not consider this a representative study, for all high school teachers and trainers in Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Romania. Rather, in this report, we present the results of in-depth interviews with teachers and trainers of different genders and ages from the four countries, who consider they have the responsibility of educating young adults about gender equality and are open to using new teaching instruments.

### 3.2. Interviews' main findings

Interviews with teachers and trainers from Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Romania showed that teachers in our sample have a genuine interest in gender equality and want to create a safe and inclusive space for discussion of all gender-related issues relevant to their students, either formally or informally. Despite this widespread interest, there is little or no institutional training available to teach gender equality and to handle gender-related issues and bullying.

Teachers are open to using innovative instruments, like serial drama, in class, if they are part of a wider educational package that includes theoretical discussions, exercises and applications and actual guidance on how sensitive subjects should be approached.

Mainly in Ireland, Italy and Romania, teachers fear socio-cultural resistance to gender topics from students, parents, other teachers and even from the school. In addition, teaching gender topics with the help of serial drama may encounter institutional challenges, such as different copyright provisions and available technical infrastructure.

The research results that the GEMINI team gathered from the focus groups with high school students and from the interviews with teachers and trainers in Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Romania indicate there is a shared interest in fundamental civil rights and gender equality in all these European countries, both for students and for their teachers, despite difficult social and cultural contexts. We discovered that, often, gender equality is a subject avoided by students' families and neglected by major educational structures: teachers find little support from students' parents and have outdated or no educational instruments and training, to teach gender-related issues.

### 3.3. The Danish teachers' perspective

In Denmark, 10 teacher interviews were carried out between December 2023 and February 2024 through video call. Participants were recruited through university networks with Danish high schools, including previous students at Aalborg University. Four of the teachers were under 40 years old, while six of the teachers were between 41 and 53 years old. Seven respondents were female and three were male. The interviews were conducted with teachers from a mixed school

typology: three regional schools, five schools from larger cities, and two schools from the capital. All teachers have Danish as their primary subject, but German, History, Arts, Social Studies, Media Studies, and Philosophy were also represented. In Denmark, the subject Danish involves mandatory attention towards media studies and media literacy, which was the main reason that all interviews in Denmark involved teachers of this specific subject.

From the Danish interviews, three main findings should be highlighted:

- a. There is a common interest in teaching gender-related issues and in doing so through serial drama.
- b. Although teachers willingly teach gender-related issues, there has been little training available, and the current teaching material needs an update.
- c. There are widespread worries about the availability of serial drama for classroom teaching and the associated copyright issues.

### 3.3.1. Teachers and serial drama

Among the teachers in our sample, all but one watch a greater number of serial dramas through predominantly local and international streaming services. Most of the teachers appear to have a wide knowledge of both contemporary and historical popular drama. All teachers engage in dialogues with students about serial drama, and many do so both in class and during breaks. One respondent's comment is representative for most of the teachers:

«It can easily be [...] that such recommendations go both ways» [F2, over 40, DK]

Serial dramas appear in the interviews to be a bridge language for teaching difficult issues. One teacher replied to the question of mutual recommendations:

«I think it's so wonderful if the students can inspire me to [watch] a series. That's what they did during the corona, the one called Centrum by Jakob [Jonas] Risvig» [F10, over 40, DK]

Mentioning the youth drama creator Risvig also indicates that teachers know about (but do not necessarily watch) the many youth serial dramas from Danish media providers.

Teachers we interviewed put little emphasis on a generational gap. Rather, there appears to be a mutual interest in watching series, and teachers appreciate that students appear well-represented in serial dramas available. However, some voice a critical approach to this specific representation:

«Some of those youth series that DR [the Danish traditional public service provider] has made for young people [are] very caricatured in their portrait of youth, and maybe that's also why they don't watch them so much» [M7, over 40, DK]

Serial drama and media literacy in general is an integrated teaching tool in Danish high schools, for Danish, for other language subjects, for Media Studies and even for Philosophy. For this reason, Danish teachers show no reluctance towards teaching serial drama or integrating media in working with gender-related issues. One teacher told us:

«We use lots of short clips as examples of things and the TV media works really well [...] also to offend the students sometimes, shake them to their core, and it is really funny sometimes if you can find something where you just think okay we can get a discussion out of that, because it is also part of our education that we should try to learn to enter into a discussion or constructive dialogues about something. Why do you think it's like this? Why is it created that way? And I actually think that the students often have a good eye for why this is a presentation, it is not like that in reality» «» [M1, under 40, DK]

Altogether, serial drama appears to be a significantly appropriate tool already in use among Danish teachers.

### 3.3.2. Teaching gender

The recent Danish Act for high school stresses that these institutions should generally “strengthen students’ knowledge about and respect for basic freedom and human rights, including gender equality” (Retsinformation 2024). While gender is not formally a part of the curriculum, gender appears to be a much-used topic, especially in language subjects, but also in Arts, Media Studies, Philosophy, and Social Sciences. For the Danish teachers we interviewed, there is both a personal and a professional interest in teaching gender, and most of them indicated it to be a topic for advanced second- or third-year levels.

«It interests me – it’s also something I work with. I do not have a course [...] called gender perceptions or gender positioning in society, but we work with gender equality in different areas [...]. Perhaps primarily literary. But I also worked with [...] mostly media perspectives on how people are portrayed» [M1, under 40, DK]

«If I were to teach some of my classes, it would have to be a senior STX [General high school], I think. Because it’s kind of on top of many other things that need to be in place first, I think» [F6, under 40, DK]

Nevertheless, teachers in our sample declared to have almost no previous training in handling gender topics in class, neither as a teaching subject nor as a sensitive personal topic.

«No [I haven’t been instructed in dealing with sensitive things], and I think that this was one of the biggest things when I became a high school teacher. How much space it takes up, these things, and how little I know» [F8, under 40, DK]

Rather, teachers would approach gender through dialogue and integrate the obvious differences of opinion that would arise in classroom, including the acknowledgment of different teacher and student vocabularies as well as internal differences among students:

«So, in that way, it’s also kind of a two-way street. I also learn a lot from them. That I don’t just become an old person stuck in some... because you grew up at a different time» [F9, over 40, DK]

«Most people, I think, are fairly open, and many also know that the right thing to do is to be open to all types of gender. And then there’s also perhaps some kind of practical life where they just want it to be one or the other. Then, their line of thinking becomes a bit square. Even though they still know that – that you must be open» [F5, under 40, DK]

Essentially, none of the teachers we interviewed appeared to regard the gender topic as “easy to teach”, but there is a widespread acknowledgement of its necessity.

To create constructive dialogues, approaching gender from a theoretical distance appears to be common ground for all teachers. For instance:

«I think it works well to give them some distance to it. So, give them some concepts and some theories, some different ways of looking at it. I think that this works well, so that they’re, like, not only by themselves all the time, but that they’re also outside of themselves [...] So, something like presenting them with different ways of looking at this and different theories about how it works, so that it is not just personal views, but it gets a scientific basis» [F4, over 40, DK]

While one specific Danish textbook on gender is often mentioned (Campion 2019), and has been widely used, teachers agree that teaching material on gender-related issues appears insufficient and needs an update.

### 3.3.3. Challenges in teaching gender-related issues

Teachers in our sample generally perceive students as open to learning about gender-related issues and challenging gender stereotypes. However, classroom activities on gender-related issues may be sensitive to handle and teach, since students have different backgrounds:

«I think you can get a feeling about what kind of a dining table they are coming from, what's being talked about at home with their parents and things like that» [F3, over 40, DK]

Nevertheless, students in high schools are widely regarded by teachers as individual young adults, and there appears to be no outside pressure that would limit discussions on gender-related issues in high schools. Rather, public high schools are commonly regarded as a democratic space, responsible for producing a common ground to address gender and other sensitive issues.

On the other hand, Danish teachers in our sample unanimously underscored copyright issues when it comes to teaching contemporary popular serial drama (for further information, see GEMINI D6.1, section 6.5, and Hansen 2024). For instance:

«There is, of course, clearly something legal in relation to what the rules are for what we are actually allowed to show. [...] After all, there are limitations to where we can find the material. If it is material that is available through accessible sources, then we may be able to show it, but it is not certain that it is really something we are allowed to do. [...] So, it's not that there is no help or courses, but it often feels like [...] that you're kind of lagging behind. [...] [We're missing] clips of varying lengths, so there are both the short introductory ones, but maybe also some longer ones where you could do a deeper analysis» [F2, over 40, DK]

The Danish interviews generally disclose a wide interest in teaching gender topics to high school students, little or no training in doing so, a predominant need for updated teaching material, and a widespread problem with copyright issues when teaching topics through serial drama.

### 3.4. The Irish teachers' perspective

12 teacher interviews were carried out in Ireland between December 2023 and February 2024 either in person or via video call. Participants were recruited through an open call and snowball sampling. A gatekeeper (an educational researcher) was used to widen the sample which was formed of five teachers over and seven under 40 years old. Nine respondents were female, two male and one was nonbinary. There was a mix of school typologies including: single sex and co-educational schools; regional and urban schools; and teachers of subjects including English; History; Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE); and English as a Second Language. Since the study was opt-in, most interviewees had an interest in gender-related issues and therefore we do not have representation of all perspectives. Further, the study did not have representation from the Western Seaboard of Ireland, which was a limitation.

There were three main findings:

- a. Media education and gender education in Irish secondary schools is, at best, sporadic and there are few dedicated spaces in which to teach them.
- b. Training on gender-related issues is not widely available to teachers.
- c. Teachers fear resistance to gender topics from students, teachers, parents and schools.

### 3.4.1. Teachers and serial drama

Half of the teachers interviewed reported high serial drama viewership. They watched across various platforms including terrestrial TV and streaming platforms:

«I watch a lot of television and I would watch a lot of big, long series like *Grey's Anatomy*, watched all of *Friends*, a lot of comedy shows like *Modern Family* and *Schitt's Creek*» [F4, under 40, IE]

Teachers in our sample were largely aware of popular serial dramas, and some reported that they engaged in conversations with students about serial dramas and either recommended to, or received recommendations from, students. This was especially the case if the teacher saw a pedagogic value in the serial drama. For example, one teacher recounted that:

«I wouldn't be afraid to recommend something if I thought it was useful because with History... historical dramas sometimes work really well... I did *The Handmaid's Tale* with the sixth years [the final school year in Irish high schools] ... so we watched the first episode of the series, because basically the flow of the first book is basically the first episode of the first series» [F5, under 40, IE]

However, teachers also reported that there was not much emphasis on media literacy in the secondary school curriculum outside of subjects such as English and History. Equally, teachers in our sample reported that students were not necessarily watching serial drama and were more inclined towards social media video platforms such as TikTok. In this respect, some teachers spoke about a generational difference that meant that they didn't identify with the media consumption habits of young people:

«The video content that they watch is... they might watch podcasts on YouTube or like short form videos on things like TikTok... that's something that I have kind of found interesting because I remember when I was at school, like we were constantly being told by the teachers to stop watching TV» [F2, under 40, IE]

«They're not really consuming the kind of content that we're consuming. They're more and more consuming those live broadcasts, those 5/10 minute YouTube or TikTok content» [M7, over 40, IE]

However, teachers did indicate that they would be comfortable in using serial drama as a pedagogic tool to address gender-related issues. They said that serial drama was appropriate for teaching most gender-related issues but were ambivalent about using it for more serious topics like domestic violence.

«I know some teachers would steer clear [of these topics]» [M1, under 40, IE]

In addition, the 12 teachers' schools were varied in the resources available to access serial dramas for teaching. For example, some reported that there were strict firewalls and that devices were only available in certain classrooms. These are important considerations in the development of a toolkit.

### 3.4.2. Teaching gender

There are a limited number of school subjects in which gender can be taught and, since it has little formal place on the curriculum, teachers said that it was at the discretion of individual teachers whether to approach gender topics at all. Most teachers mentioned appropriate subjects as English; History and SPHE. However, the latter subject is not an examinable subject and teachers receive limited training for it. In addition, some teachers we interviewed reported

that the curriculum is intensely exam-focused which results in non-examinable subjects being prioritized less:

«At senior cycle [especially] these things [the teaching of gender-related issues] kind of get lost, as teachers and students struggle to prepare for the exams» [F9, over 40, IE]

One teacher said that, because the inclusion of gender topics was often at the discretion of the teacher, some teachers would exclude gender topics altogether and this meant that students could go through their education without engaging with discussions about gender equality:

«I don't mean to stereotype. But, you know, if you have an older kind of close-to-retirement male teacher, like I doubt he's going to be sat there talking about Maya Angelou and like, you know, the inequalities that she faced as a woman and a black woman, he's going to do the Seamus Heaney poems he's done for the 40 years of his career» [F3, under 40, IE]

Most teachers reported that they had little training that could assist them in teaching gender topics, or that their training was out of date. This made some of them cautious about engaging with gender topics:

«My heart starts to race, because I'm not hugely confident in delivering that [gender equality] message correctly... I suppose I'm very sensitive to that I'm talking to 14 or 15 year olds [...] that I might say the wrong thing, that I might affect them in some way or other, they might take it a way that I don't intend for because it's personal ... I wouldn't want to say anything to upset them» [F6, over 40, IE]

Nonetheless, most teachers reported that they engaged in discussions about gender and society in some form with students on a semi-regular basis:

«Just based on my own background, I tend to bring [gender] in quite regularly in my lessons, because it's something that's on my mind and that's important to me. So, I would make sure that discussions would include issues like that» [F8, under 40, IE]

«I would try and bring it into the class quite a bit. When we're doing, for example, our [Irish historical] revolutionary periods, I'd spend a lot of time looking at female contributions to the Irish revolution» [NB10, under 40, IE]

A number of the teachers were actively dedicated to finding space in the curriculum to be gender and LGBTQI+ inclusive. For example, teachers would use the assigned English novels and plays to discuss gender and race representation. Others reported that they focused on women's histories in the Irish History curriculum. They were, nonetheless, very concerned about resistance to this teaching by various stakeholders.

### 3.4.3. Challenges in teaching gender-related issues

Teachers reported multiple forms of resistance to teaching about gender-related issues including from students, parents, other teachers and the school. Teachers reported that there was a gender difference in how engaged students were in gender-related issues, with boys being more resistant to discussing gender inequality and gender stereotyping than girls. One teacher, for example, said that:

«There's a perception from a lot of the boys that there is no gender inequality in Irish society anymore, that it's all been solved. Whereas the teenage girls I taught were much more [aware of inequality], but they have skin in the game» [F2, under 40, IE]

«We would find some students very challenging when we're touching on that subject» [F12, over 40, IE]

«[student engagement in gender topics] often [occurs] in quite an aggressive way...in a confrontational way...Last year one of the students said 'miss, are you a feminist?' and I said "yeah, I'm a feminist" "...and they're all kind of really taken aback"» [F1, over 40, IE]

Three of the interviewees reported that parents had attempted to have gender-related issues excluded from the curriculum or to have their children removed from classes that dealt with issues perceived to relate to gender, sex and sexuality. The same teacher said that:

«We have had parents actually... saying that they're going to take their son or daughter out of SPHE classes whenever relationships or sexuality is mentioned» [F2, under 40, IE]

This resulted in many of the teachers saying that they were, at times, nervous or cautious about introducing gender topics to the classroom, despite their support for such topics. Teachers did observe reluctance and resistance to gender topics from other teachers, with some teachers relaying stories about teachers who “outright refused” to teach topics related to gender and sexuality. Overall, our interviewees suggested that the lack of engagement with gender-related issues from other teachers could be attributed to a myriad of issues including: lack of appropriate training; nervousness about student or parent backlash; reluctance to engage in ‘new’ topics from older teachers; and ideological opposition to gender topics. Further, the school ethos could be seen as in “conflict” with the teaching of gender topics. Three of the interviewees were, for example, employed by schools with a Catholic ethos. A final and important point is that these collective resistances accompanied and were interconnected with another issue: an emerging misogyny among some students, staff and the wider public.

### 3.5. The Italian teachers' perspective

In Italy, 10 interviews with teachers were carried out via video call between November and December 2023. Participants were recruited through the network of high schools belonging to “Generazione Proteo” – the permanent Observatory on Italian young adults based at LCU – which formally joined the GEMINI project.

From a socio-demographic point of view, six teachers were female and four male; three were under 40 years old, while seven were between 41 and 66 years old<sup>6</sup>. The interviews were conducted with teachers from schools of different typology (six theoretical; four technological or vocational), located all over Italy: North (two); Centre (four); South (two); Islands (two). Based on our previous research<sup>7</sup>, we decided not to link the choice of teacher to the subject taught, as we found that in many cases the “reference teachers” for the students on gender-related issues were themselves very heterogeneous.

Three main findings emerge from the Italian interviews:

- a. Watching serial dramas is perceived as a tool for a better approach and dialogue with students, although there is a generation gap.
- b. The approach to gender-related issues is the result of an individual training path, rather than of an established process within the school environment.

<sup>6</sup> The average age of the respondents reflects the age variable of the target group of teachers in Italy, where 61% of teachers in general upper secondary education are aged 50 or over (compared to the OECD average of 39%) [EAG 2023].

<sup>7</sup> Over the years, research studies carried out by “Generazione Proteo”, especially through focus groups, have shown that Italian young adults consider some teachers as a reference point with whom to discuss sensitive issues, such as gender-related ones, regardless of whether they deal with these issues in their teaching.



- c. Teaching gender-related issues through serial dramas is generally accepted, but often clashes with socio-cultural resistance.

### 3.5.1. Teachers and serial drama

Although the interviewees' heterogeneity of consumption habits – with some teachers defining themselves as «*serial drama lovers*» [M2, under 40, IT], sometimes «*quite pathological*» [M5, over 40, IT], and others saying «*I'm not a particular fan of them*» [F1, over 40, IT] – all respondents agreed that watching serial dramas helps to better understand students' behaviours, languages and attitudes, as well as to bridge with their interest and the main social trends:

«I have faced the need to watch them, or at least to deal with them, because they have become a channel of communication with young people, or at least a way of getting as close as possible to what their world is all about» [F1, over 40, IT]

«When students ask you to talk to them, even about serial dramas, you can't stay speechless and not have an argument. So I started to watch some of them and I noticed that they liked some series because they had so many messages, because they talked about friendship, love, politics» [M2, under 40, IT]

This openness to the world of serial dramas is also often the result of a mutual exchange of suggestions and recommendations between teachers and students on the series to watch:

«Maybe I recommend something because it is also useful for the subjects I teach. And they recommend me some series that are closer to them, especially teen dramas, and from here some more intimate stories emerge, related to sexuality, which they talk to me about» [M3, over 40, IT]

However, this widespread practice does not always lead to a convergence of opinions, tastes, and interests. In fact, teachers we interviewed often feel uncomfortable because the proposed plot is «*so far from my real horizon*» [F4, over 40, IT] and perceive a generational difference that «*lies in the ability to analyse, the ability to go deeper into things*» [M8, under 40, IT].

This physiological generation gap is reinforced by the teachers' general belief that their students' generation is not faithfully portrayed in serial dramas, both because of the socio-cultural context in which the stories are set, which «*is more inspired to the Anglo-Saxon way of living*» [F10, over 40, IT] and, more specifically, because of the portrayal of young adults' fragilities which is often described as somewhat stereotypical or even too detached from the youth world:

«They don't reflect the reality of young adults. They make them seem less responsible for their own actions, their own ideas, a bit fragile. And they're not like that» [F4, over 40, IT]

### 3.5.2. Teaching gender

A recent directive from the Italian Ministry of Education (Italian Ministry of Education and Merit, 2023) proposes an experimental project on relationship and affectivity education in high schools, aimed primarily at gender-based violence. Some teachers we spoke to mention this proposal mostly in a critical way, highlighting the ambiguous competences and responsibilities entrusted to schools in these matters:

«There is a lot of talk about this affectivity education. It is a broad term, and until we say what we put in it, I am not in a position to say whether the school can or should deal with it or not. I am not entirely convinced that the school should play this role» [M3, over 40, IT]

However, this approach does not reflect a distancing of teachers from discussing and teaching gender-related issues. On the contrary, teachers in our sample show great interest in dealing with

gender-related issues, even though some point out the need to be supported by *«people with different training, who can also be researchers in psychology, in communication»* [F6, over 40, IT]. Overall, teachers state that the ability to discuss certain topics in depth is not always the result of previous well-structured training courses, but rather depends on their personal interests and vocation, since *«much is left to common sense, empathy, and individual talent»* [M3, over 40, IT]. Indeed, they often deal with gender-related issues – both from a personal and a teaching perspective – because they need to face difficult situations in their own classrooms, *«in some cases also taking on, or even replacing, a sort of parental role»* [M9, under 40, IT].

This individual predisposition is also reflected in the choice to address gender-related issues while teaching different disciplines, thus allowing students to explore certain issues from different perspectives of analysis:

«In my teaching programme, over the past few years, I have included a module on “Women’s Thought in Twentieth Century Europe”, to promote the idea that women should be recognized for the value they can bring to society» [F6, over 40, IT]

«I teach Philosophy and this year I am going to include a unit on feminist thought. I’ve decided to look for some authors who are not usually part of the curricula, to start from there and then open up to a more general discussion with students» [M3, over 40, IT]

### 3.5.3. Challenges in teaching gender-related issues

All teachers interviewed expressed a positive attitude towards the use of serial dramas as a teaching tool on gender-related issues, considering them *«in all respects equal and better than the book»* [F1, over 40, IT]. Even if they pointed out some limitations of such a teaching method, they welcome the opportunity to benefit from a range of tools and content in a “modular” perspective, complementing the traditional content of their courses:

«If there is an opportunity to condense the series into a time frame that could be more functional in teaching, why not?» [F10, over 40, IT]

«It might be easier if you have a platform that collects these materials and perhaps has modular learning paths, so that they could also be customized with videos, fact sheets and content» [M2, under 40, IT]

All teachers in our sample, despite coming from different school backgrounds, consider their schools to be *«quite well equipped»* to provide innovative training using audiovisual materials. However, even if there are no technical obstacles, the real challenge of teaching gender-related issues through drama serials is at the socio-cultural level.

On the one hand, teachers mention the variety of their classes, composed of students from different background and sensitivities to the point that:

«The difficulty would be to find a serial drama that is not only enjoyable but also able to provide insight without indirectly “attacking” anyone» [F5, over 40, IT]

On the other hand, although they are aware of the limited influence of serial dramas in “normalizing” gender-related issues among students, many teachers hope to *«redirect this process of influence towards parents»* [F7, over 40, IT]. Indeed, it is precisely parents who are mentioned as the main “resistance factor” to the adoption of an innovative teaching approach on gender-related issues:

«Parents are the last to know about their sons’ and daughters’ homosexuality, because there is no empathy, there is no trust [...] Every time I try to deal with these issues in school, they stop this process in their families, so I don’t know how effective this new learning path can be» [M8, under 40, IT]

Nevertheless, teachers are willing to take up the challenge and try to act as a bridge between students and families, by involving the parents themselves in a training course on gender-related issues «because if they are involved, it might also be easier for them to accept this kind of discourse in school» [M2, under 40, IT].

### 3.6. The Romanian teachers' perspective

In Romania, we interviewed, in the period December 2023-April 2024, 10 high school teachers, from public (eight) and private (two) schools of three different types: theoretical, technological, and economic. The subjects taught by the teachers interviewed were also diverse, however, all of them cover gender equality in class or during official interactions with students. Thus, 6 of them teach social disciplines (Sociology, Psychology, Economics, Social Education), 2 teach Math, one teaches Geography and 1 English. 2 of the teachers in our sample are school counsellors, 1 is a school principal, and most are class coordinators, covering a discipline called *dirigenție* (class coordination) during which several issues are discussed, including fundamental human rights. The sample is not representative: only one teacher was from outside Bucharest. One teacher was male and nine were female, four were under and six were over 40 years old.

We can highlight at least three main findings, from the Romanian interviews:

- a. Gender-related issues are seldom discussed in the family.
- b. Teachers over 40 years old are the only ones who received training, from associations and NGOs, mostly, related to gender equality.
- c. Serial dramas may be used to cover gender equality in class, but they should be paired with other pedagogical instruments (such as exercises).

#### 3.6.1. Teachers and serial drama

As expected, teachers we interviewed said they do not have too much spare time – they watch serial dramas sporadically, at weekends or during holidays. Because of this, some prefer serial dramas or sitcoms with each episode concluding a narrative plot, some watch serial dramas and do not regret skipping parts of them:

«However, even if I lose two or three episodes, I get to understand it until the end and I usually watch the last episodes» [F4, over 40, RO]

The main source for serial dramas is streaming, but our interviewees also mention live television, such as HBO, AXN or Diva:

«Streaming, streaming, streaming. I have everything there is. I have Netflix, Disney, Prime, all I can» [F8, under 40, RO]

The teachers in our sample discuss serial dramas with their students in two distinct circumstances. In informal circumstances, outside classes, teachers and students, albeit rarely, exchange information about the different series everyone has been watching and either give or receive recommendations. During teaching activities, teachers – especially the younger ones – use different elements from the series watched by the students to illustrate the theoretical notions:

«There are times when we talk about certain topics of geography and maybe some serial dramas have had places involved in certain plots [...] There is one I use as an example in the 11th grade with Chernobyl in discussing hazards, I use this as well» [M9, under 40, RO]

The teachers we interviewed admit that current generations of students are different compared to themselves as adolescents, but, as one of the interviewees remarked, there are differences, not 'a gap'. Students now have the advantage of accessing technologies unavailable in the past, and, through these technologies, accessing all kinds of information. A consequence of this status is that they give priority to consuming entertainment – from gaming to serial drama, not to school. Students may spend an entire night watching serial dramas:

«They watch all night, I know that, because they come very tired» [F7, under 40, RO]

Even if the majority of the teachers we spoke to think that the characters depicting adolescents in serial dramas they watch are stereotypical, young adults identify with these characters and imitate their behaviour:

«Many of them identify with people in series, some try to become the characters they see, [they try to] do what they see in those films or serial dramas. Some shows are educational, but they don't really watch these shows» [F5, over 40, RO]

These teachers express a regret that adolescents do not identify with and do not replicate the models from serial dramas with an educational message.

### 3.6.2. Teaching gender

Teachers in our sample are aware of gender-related issues in society and are interested in the evolutions of these phenomena and the debates in the public space:

«I am interested to know how these affect their relationships in school» [F1, over 40, RO]

Some said that they approach gender equality any time a certain aspect of the discipline they teach refers to or has implications for gender-related issues:

«I'm generally interested in social issues in society, as a sociology teacher, and discrimination based on certain gender stereotypes associated with roles that persist, which involve their gender and we get to discuss this» [F10, under 40, RO]

«We talk about the population, and automatically some tend to ask certain things about those situations or talk about problems. Since I teach geography, I have even discussed population structure by age group and sex. We talked about these things» [M9, under 40, RO]

Teachers we interviewed did not follow institutionalized training programs, as no training is offered through the Ministry of Education system, in order to teach gender equality or to handle gender-related issues in school:

«No, I never had any [training] like that. We have read, we have searched on our own, but we had no training on this topic» [F2, over 40, RO]

Some of the teachers over 40 years old, with longer careers, attended workshops and trainings offered by several NGOs, at some point in the past. Most of these trainings were centered on human rights in general, on avoiding hate speech and on dealing with bullying, especially related to special needs categories.

In the curriculum there is no discipline devoted entirely to gender equality. These issues may be approached during class coordination hours (*dirigentie*), during discussions with teachers outside of class, as part of another discipline, as an illustration of a more general subject (as it is the case with demography, during geography classes), or with the school counsellor (at students's request). The inclusion of such a discipline as an optional course is rather simple:

«[the teacher, the students or the parents] suggest the topics. We give them such classes, of course, it depends on what we have as human resource. You know, they often ask for drama

[classes], and we can offer this. And, indeed, we have put such options of civic education courses on the socio-human side. When proposed, they accepted them» [F4, over 40, RO]

### 3.6.3. Challenges in teaching gender-related issues

Our interviews show that students often approach teachers to talk about gender-related issues for two reasons: it is a difficult subject to talk about inside the family, either because parents are indifferent to or have no skills in approaching sensitive issues, or because the parents of many children from public schools are away, working abroad most of the year.

«Parents do not know how to approach the issue and it is easier for them to leave to teachers or to schools what they should do at home» [F1, over 40, RO]

«[The family is an alternative] when they have their family close by. [...] there's a big wave of parents leaving the country [...] there are children with both parents living abroad. These children remain in the care of a grandparent or an aunt who, being older, quickly loses touch with the teenager» [F2, over 40, RO]

When it comes to optional disciplines, students more often choose to study the subjects required for the baccalaureate examination, and have a lower interest in additional subjects, such as gender equality:

«Usually, the optional classes are used for Romanian literature, math, physics, chemistry, those that are for baccalaureate and then there is little room for such optional extras outside the common trunk» [F7, under 40, RO]

The teachers we interviewed think that:

«There should be no taboos in class: anything can be discussed, any content can be discussed and parametrized to the level of understanding of each age» [F3, over 40, RO]

Nevertheless, they often have to face reactions from parents that complain and consider that a discussion of LGBTQI+ issues in the classroom is inappropriate.

All teachers in our sample underlined that their schools have all necessary devices – computers, smartboards, video projectors, internet connections. The technical support for using short extras from serial dramas to discuss gender-related issues is available. Videoclips from the different serial dramas that teenagers watch may be used as a base for discussions, especially if the characters in these clips are young people close to their age:

«And I think that somehow serial dramas would help broaden students' perspectives. That is, it would be good to use a material as diverse as possible, or sequences from series as diverse as possible, but also to include characters of their age so that they can resonate with the way they are represented» [F5, over 40, RO]

Some of the teachers we interviewed already use short videoclips to guide discussion in class:

«In group counseling I use short clips, depending on my subjects, to see if they choose the right things. I work on short videoclips, to analyse sequences with them» [F6, over 40, RO]

Teachers in our sample said that the clips chosen for class should avoid stereotypical representations of adolescents, of gender relationships, of parents and so on. On the other hand, they believe that such a resource could be very useful, but suggested it should be paired with pedagogical instruments:

«What would help? A guide with theoretical issues, exercises and applications; also, small videos, as you said, but the basis is exercises and applications» [F1, over 40, RO]

## Measuring serial dramas influence on young adults' perception of gender-related issues

### 4.1. The GEMINI transnational survey

The second phase of the GEMINI audience research consisted of a transnational survey that explored the relationship between serial dramas, gender-related issues, and European young adults. The survey aimed to understand two main aspects: first, the level of awareness and interest among European young adults in high schools regarding gender and diversity issues from an intersectional perspective, considering both a *symbolic dimension* (gender identities, sexual orientation, etc.) and a *factual* one (gender equality, gender pay gap, etc.); second, *whether* and *how* serial dramas influence young adults' perception of gender-related issues, providing models that shape opinions, habits and behaviours.

The survey was designed by the sociological team of Link Campus University in collaboration with academic partners involved in WP3 (Aalborg University, University of Bucharest, Maynooth University), and it was distributed across the same 4 European countries.

#### 4.1.1. Aims, methods and structure

From a methodological standpoint, the survey consists of a semi-structured questionnaire (Corbetta, 2014; Croteau & Hoynes, 2018) featuring a predetermined set of closed-ended questions and some open-ended fields. While the former allow us to generalize findings and quantify trends and patterns, the latter serve as an additional qualitative tool to complement the quantitative data collected through the closed-ended questions. The survey is designed to be filled in anonymously and without specific instructions or assistance.

The choice of the questionnaire as a research tool considers its specific features and advantages, particularly in terms of immediacy, completeness and effectiveness, as well as the predefined methods of survey dissemination. To reach a broad European audience, both transnationally and nationally, the survey employed a CAWI (*Computer Assisted Web Interviewing*) methodology. This approach requires a user-friendly tool, that optimizes both the administration and filling processes while preserving the breadth and depth of the analysis.

Based on these premises, designing the survey structure and defining its contents and questions began from the aforementioned qualitative stage. In particular, focus groups provided many suggestions and “food for thought”, which were then translated into structured questions aimed at obtaining relevant data, suitable for effective comparison between different socio-cultural contexts.

The results of the focus groups were operationalised within an analysis grid specifically designed for this research. It enabled the identification of four main topics to be developed in the resulting four sections of the questionnaire:

- a. The first section (*Watching serial dramas: habits and attitudes*) focuses on viewing habits, investigating how consumption practices take shape (type of channel/platform used, preference for a lonely or social watching experience, etc.) as well as the main reasons behind the choice of which serial dramas to watch. This section includes specific questions focused on viewers' preferences for teen dramas.

- b. The second section (*Gender & Diversity*) examines European young adults' knowledge and awareness of gender and diversity issues from an intersectional perspective. A specific set of questions explores *whether* and *how* these topics are part of the everyday life of European high school students, and the role of schools in fostering awareness and inclusiveness, as well as in reinforcing opposition to all types of gender-based violence.
- c. The third section (*Serial dramas and the gender*) detects European high school students' opinions on how serial dramas address gender-related issues. Most questions in this section measure the extent to which serial dramas both perpetuate gender stereotypes or promote inclusive societal models.
- d. The last section (*The influence of serial dramas*) aims to understand *whether* and *how* European high school students perceive serial dramas as powerful tools for spreading gender stereotypes or suggesting inclusive models of society, and to what extent they feel themselves as really influenced by the representations of gender-related issues in serial dramas.

During the survey definition phase, it was agreed to establish ex ante the total number of expected replies, aiming for no less than 1.000 duly completed questionnaires overall and at least 250 duly completed questionnaires for each country. This decision did not account for the varying population size of the four involved countries, but it was motivated by their extreme demographic heterogeneity. For instance, Italy has just under 60 million inhabitants, making a weight comparison challenging not only with Denmark's approximately 6 millions and Ireland's about 5 millions, but also with Romania's 19 millions inhabitants.

#### 4.1.2. Dissemination, data collection and processing

The questionnaire was initially drafted in English by Link Campus University (November 2023) and then shared and discussed with partners from Aalborg University, University of Bucharest and Maynooth University (December 2023). Once approved in its final version, it was translated into the official languages of the countries involved in the research (Danish, Italian, Romanian) and uploaded to the Google Forms app<sup>8</sup>. This allowed the creation of a separate form for each language, generating specific links to easily access and complete the questionnaire in the chosen language (January-April 2024).



[\[link\]](#)



[\[link\]](#)



[\[link\]](#)



[\[link\]](#)

<sup>8</sup> The questionnaire was hosted by LCU's internal ITC service. LCS served as the only data collector of responses coming from all countries.

The survey was distributed through the network of contacts that each partner had previously established with schools in their country during the focus groups, as well as by establishing new contacts to reach a larger number of respondents. To facilitate schools' participation in this research activity, LCU also drafted a letter explaining the main goals of the survey and specifying the methods for processing personal data. As the data collector and data controller, LCU committed to ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of participants, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, as well as with [LCU's Child Protection Policy](#).

Data collection showed varying outcomes across the different countries involved in the project. This can be attributed to differences in reactions to the covered topics and, perhaps, the varying level of confidence in the methodological tool chosen for the research. However, the overall number of the duly completed questionnaires and their specific features allow to assign a certain degree of statistical significance to the panel of respondents<sup>9</sup>.

The total number of questionnaires completed by the survey's closing date amounted to 1,106, with 291 from Denmark, 146 from Ireland, 363 from Italy and 306 from Romania. Compared to the predefined quotas set during the research design stage, only Ireland did not reach the target of 250 questionnaires. According to the Maynooth University team, this shortfall is mainly due to the sensitivity of the topic. More in particular, the main issue for schools, especially those without established ties to Maynooth University researchers, was a reluctance among teachers to administer the survey, reflecting a protective approach towards their students. Nonetheless, these teachers were more forthcoming in speaking to the Maynooth team through the interview process.

Due to the lower number of replies coming from Irish high schools and the need to compare these data with those from the other three involved countries, specific statistical weighting operations (Corbetta, Gasperoni, Pisati 2001) were conducted to obtain a homogeneous data sample.

At the end of data collection, the Google Forms app provided an output in ".csv" format for each language version of the questionnaire. These databases were subsequently converted into ".excel" format to proceed with the suitable operations of data organization, systematization and cleaning based on the empirical results collected. Following this, a data matrix was created to encode variables and their related categories into numerical values, which were then transposed into SPSS software for the statistical processing of quantitative data.

For questions that allowed multiple answers, it was agreed during the data encoding and processing to assign a proportional value to each item. This involved doubling (for up to 2 answers) and/or multiplying (for up to 3 answers) the single value for cases where only one answer was expressed, thus preserving the original value.

During the data processing phase, we observed a variable rate of "non-response" for some of the survey questions. At first, there was a debate on whether to re-percentage the data for questions with higher "non-response" rates. However, after a more careful and thorough evaluation, we found that the non-response rate was very low in the initial sections of the survey, which dealt with more general issues, and higher in the later sections, especially for very specific or controversial questions. Consequently, we decided to leave this evidence "visible", as it provides an interesting data point for assessing respondents' propensity to express or withhold opinions

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<sup>9</sup> Although the panel has not been subjected to any sampling operation, it nevertheless seems to adequately represent the reference target groups.



on the surveyed issues. Overall, the highest non-response rates were recorded among young Irish and Danish respondents, while Italians and Romanians responded more comprehensively to all questions.

Data analysis consisted of both univariate and bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis, conducted on the total number of completed questionnaires, involved calculating frequency distributions. This type of analysis, which examines one variable at a time, ensures an easy and clear understanding of the data distribution and provides a comprehensive overview of each variable's main characteristics. It also lays the foundation for more complex analyses, including bivariate analysis. Bivariate analysis, which examines the relationship between two variables, was performed using contingency tables to highlight analogies and differences between the 4 involved countries. By examining these relationships, bivariate analysis allows to determine whether significant correlations or associations exist between variables and understand their mutual influence. This understanding is essential for building predictive models and testing research hypotheses.

#### 4.2. Detecting the interviewees: a socio-demographic identikit

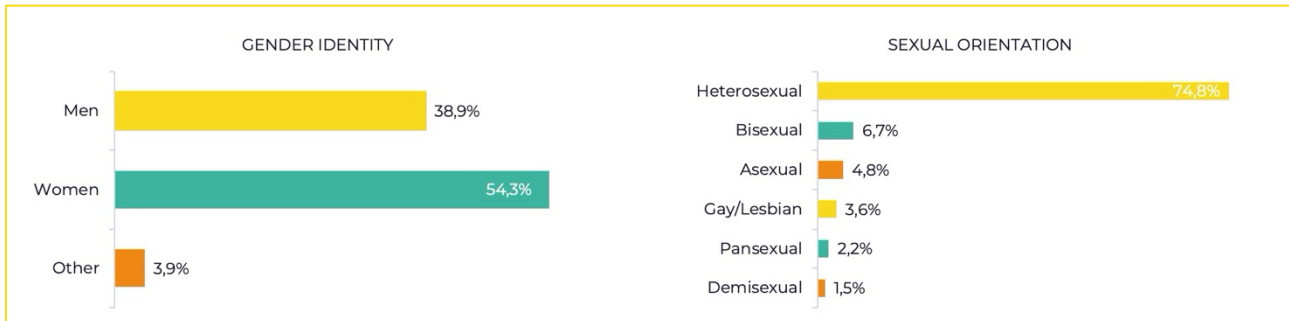
Before introducing the analysis of the survey results, it is necessary to define the socio-demographic identikit of the respondents. This step aims to determine if the panel, while not statistically determined, can be considered representative of the different countries involved in the survey and characterized by sufficiently heterogeneous socio-demographic features.

The information derived from profiling the survey respondents will be useful in further stages of the analysis. It may facilitate an academic debate and service institutions with bivariate analyses that consider not only the respondents' country but also other significant variables such as gender identities, sexual orientations, age groups, or geographical locations.

Examining the first variable (gender identities), data show a representation of both men and women, with women more represented than men (54.3% vs. 38.9%), except of Ireland, where there is a higher number of male respondents (48.6% vs. 40.4%). Conversely, other investigated gender identities (trans man, trans woman, non-binary, genderqueer, agender, gender fluid) each fall below the symbolic threshold of 1%, with a total amount of 3.9% [TABLE 1]<sup>10</sup>.

Turning to the distribution by sexual orientation, the majority of respondents (74.8%) identify as heterosexual. While percentages for sexual orientation other than heterosexual are lower, noteworthy figures include 12.4% of young adults in Romania identifying as asexual and 6.9% as bisexual. Bisexuality is also prevalent among 9.3% of young adults in Denmark, while the highest percentage of homosexuals (gay/lesbian) is found among Irish respondents (6.2%) [TABLE 2].

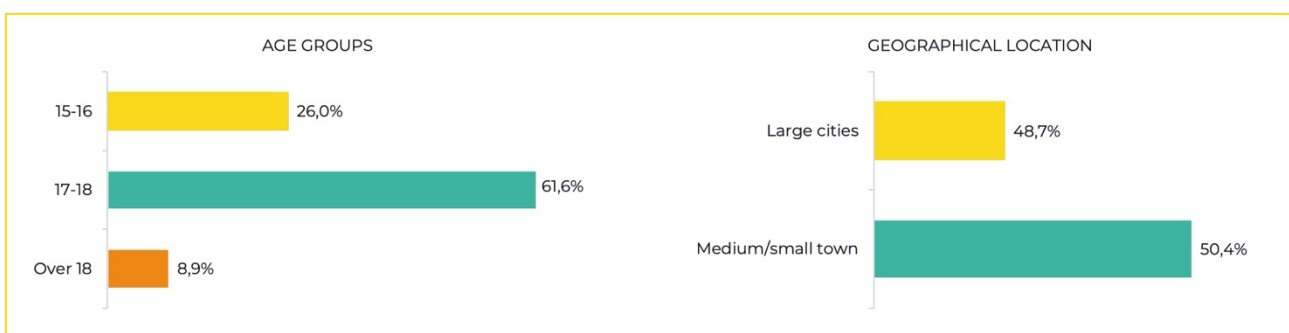
<sup>10</sup> All the tables quoted in this section could be found in full edition in the Appendix.



Regarding age groups, responses were categorized into three groups: 15-16 years old, 17-18 years old, and over 18 years old. The majority of respondents belong to the 17-18 age group (61.6%), a trend particularly notable among Danish and Italian students (65% and 74.5% respectively). In contrast, nearly half of Irish respondents are in the younger 15-16 age group (48.7%), while approximately one in four Danish students (24.7%) is older than 18 [TABLE 3].

The geographical variable was examined in terms of the respondents' home school locations. Initially, it was assumed that geographical location would be analysed by distinguishing between "city centre" and "suburbs", as also highlighted in the focus group report. However, the geographical diversity of the European countries involved in the survey made it difficult to classify locations strictly as urban or suburban. Therefore, the analysis was adapted to highlight the respondents' geographical origins based on whether their schools were in large cities (or metropolises) or in small to medium-sized towns, defining this distinction according to each country's size.

Although, at first glance, the geographical origins of respondents appear balanced between large cities (48.7%) and medium/small towns (50.4%) overall, significant variations exist within different national contexts. In Romania and Denmark, more respondents came from large cities (76.7% and 67.4%, respectively), whereas in Italy and Ireland, the majority were from medium/small towns (62.6% and 84.1%, respectively). Due to a more diversified distribution of the survey, it was also possible in Italy and Denmark to recover the additional variable initially considered, distinguishing the origin of respondents from large cities based on the location of the school in the city centre or the suburbs. Although most respondents in both countries attended schools in the city centre (89.3% in Denmark and 75.2% in Italy), it is newsworthy that in Italy, 1 in 4 respondents attended suburban schools, while this percentage stands at 10.7% in Denmark [TABLE 4].

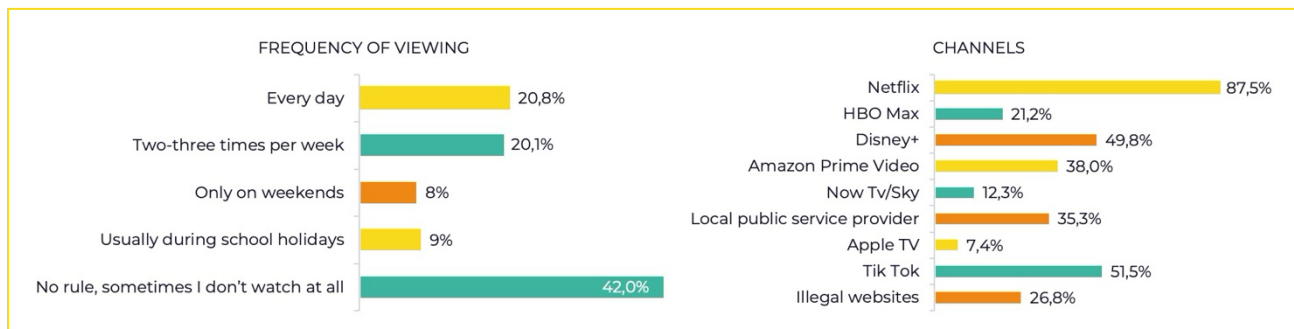


### 4.3. Watching serial dramas: habits and attitudes

After defining the socio-demographic profile of the interviewees, the subsequent phase of the analysis focused specifically on the respondents' viewing habits and practices, aiming to understand their preferences regarding serial dramas, particularly those centred on the lives, challenges, and experiences of teenagers, better known as “teen dramas”.

#### 4.3.1. Unloyal and lonely screeners (with a Netflix addiction)

Regarding the amount of time spent watching serial dramas, European young adults do not appear to be consistently glued to the screen. More than 4 in 10 (42%, peaking at 48.3% among Italians) report not watching them regularly, and instead acknowledge non-linear viewing habits that include periods without watching them at all. Young Danes, however, stand out as some of the most regular viewers: 1 in 3 state they watch serial dramas daily (30.6%) or at least two to three times a week (26.8%), compared to the overall averages of 20.8% and 20.1% respectively [TABLE 5]. Examining the primary channels and platforms used by interviewees to watch serial dramas, Netflix confirms its dominant position as the most popular platform among respondents overall (87.5%), with the highest usage recorded among Danish viewers (92.1%). Following at a significant distance are TikTok (51.5%) and Disney+ (49.8%). Local public service providers are predominately used by Italian (46.8%) and Danish (41.6%) young adults, while their usage is lower in Ireland (19.2%). Interestingly, despite 26.8% of respondents admitting to using illegal streaming services, with higher rates among young Italians (43.8%), focus groups revealed even higher and more transversal illegal consumption across all European countries [TABLE 6].



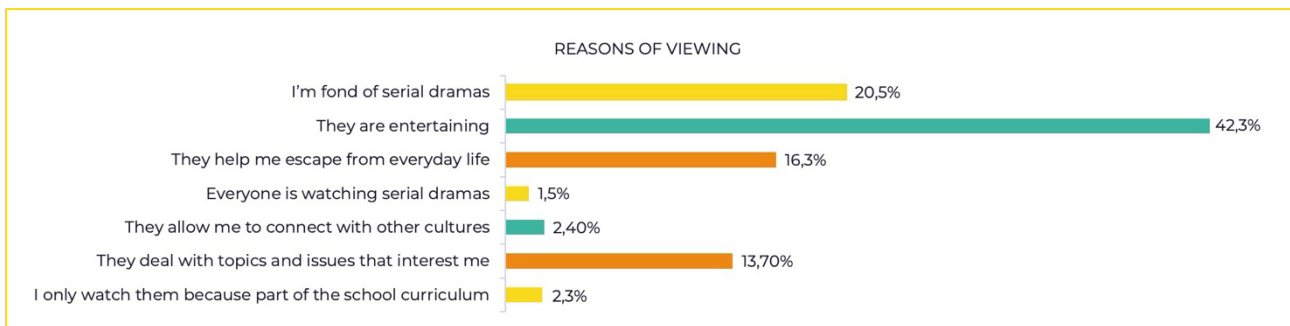
Across almost all countries – and consistent with previous research on European viewers across different age groups (Bengesser *et al.*, 2023)– there is a preference for “solitary consumption”, with 73.6% of young Europeans preferring to watch serial dramas alone [TABLE 7].

#### 4.3.2. Serial drama and teen drama lovers?

Taking a closer look at the main reasons why European young adults<sup>11</sup> watch serial dramas, entertainment stands out as the foremost motivation, cited by the overall 42.3% of respondents

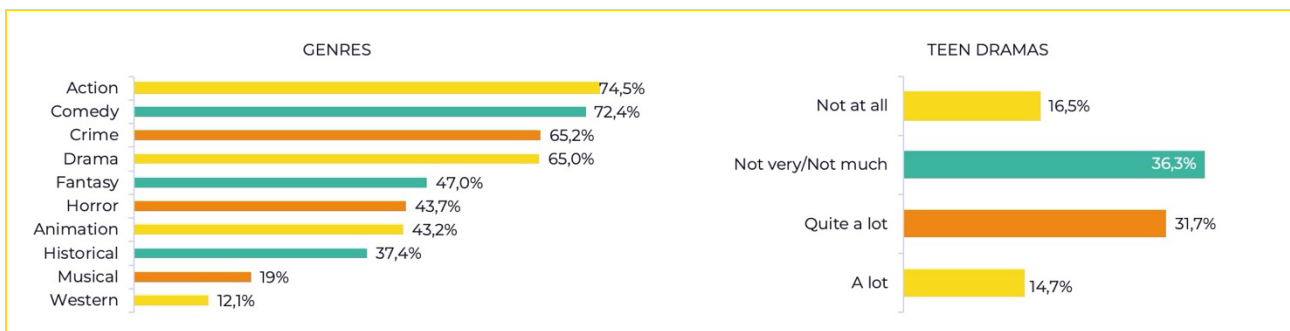
<sup>11</sup> The expression “European young adults” used to comment on the data in this section is not intended to generalize the results to all young Europeans but is a simplification referring to European young adults in the 4 countries where the survey was conducted.

overall. However, this reason is less emphasised among young Romanians (22.1%), who are more likely to watch due to a general fondness for serial dramas (39.9%). Interestingly, while only 16.3% of European young adults overall associate serial dramas with escapism from everyday life, this motivation is more prevalent among young Danes (24.1%) and Romanians (19.8%). Conversely, young Italians indicate a higher interest in the topics and issues addressed by serial dramas (19.8%) [TABLE 8].



Regarding the most popular genres, action leads with 74.5% of respondents mentioning it, particularly favoured by young Romanians (83%). Comedy follows closely at 72.4%, especially popular among young Danes (81.8%), with crime (65.2%) and drama (65%) also ranking high. Additionally, 37.4% of respondents mention historical genre, reflecting insights from focus groups, where series like *Bridgerton* and its spin-off *Queen Charlotte* were frequently mentioned, particularly in Italy [TABLE 10].

Looking specifically at the consumption preferences of European young adults regarding teen dramas, the data reveal a divided interest among respondents. A total of 52.8% indicate they either watch teen drama “not at all” or “not very/not much”, with the highest proportion among young Irish (67.8%). Conversely, 46.4% consider themselves “quite a lot” or “a lot” engaged viewers. Comparing these findings with insights from focus groups, it appears that broader interest in teen dramas often hinges on transnational productions like the widely discussed case of *SKAM*. However, the strong interest shown by young Italians (56%) is likely influenced by specific national productions such as the popular teen drama *Mare fuori* [TABLE 11].



Examining the main reasons for these consumption patterns, starting with less regular viewers, many young Europeans prefer genres other than teen drama (34.4%), a sentiment particularly

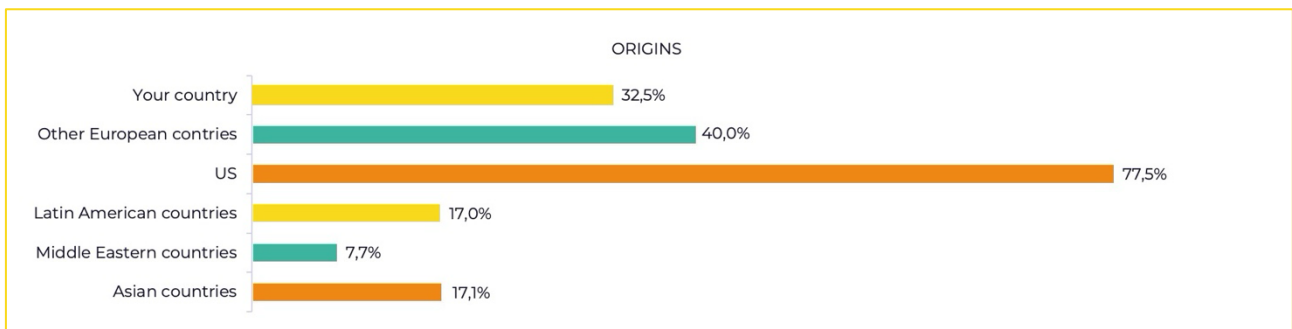
pronounced among young Danes (46.6%). Additionally, about 1 in 5 young adults (19.4%) feel that teen dramas portray teenage life unrealistically, a view more prevalent among young Romanians (23%) [TABLE 12].

Conversely, those more interested in teen dramas are driven by personal and age-related variables. For instance, 27% of frequent viewers appreciate how teen dramas address issues relevant to their age group. Another 21.4% express a general preference for the drama or romance genre [TABLE 13].

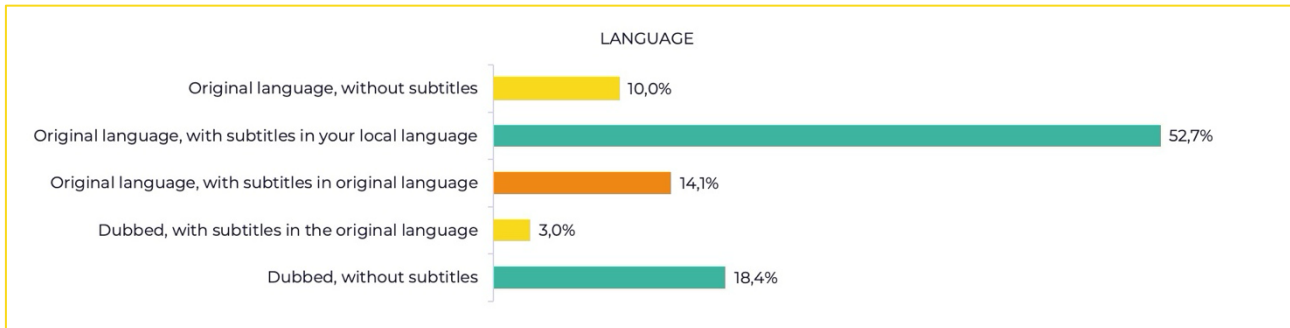
### 4.3.3. Local, unlocal, glocal

When asked about their favourite serial dramas' country of origin, 3 macro-trends emerge among European young adults.

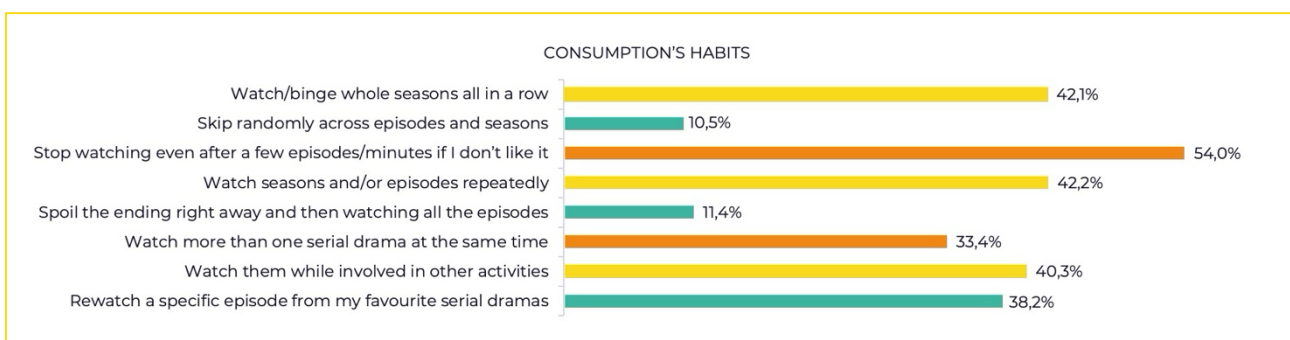
Firstly, there is a strong preference for serial dramas from the United States, with 77.5% of respondents stating they watch these productions “quite a lot” or “a lot”, reaching a peak among Danish young adults (90.4%). Secondly, a noticeable gap appears when respondents are asked about their preference between series from their own country versus from other European countries. Indeed, 32.5% express a preference for domestic productions, with young Italians showing the highest inclination at 46.9%. Conversely, 40% of respondents prefer series from other European countries, with young Romanians standing out as the most “(pro)European” viewers (53.3%). Lastly, there is a niche consumption of serial dramas from Latin American (17%) and Asian (17.1%) countries, with even fewer opting for dramas from Middle Eastern countries (7.7%) [TABLE 14].



Examining preferences regarding the languages in which serial dramas are watched, almost 1 in 2 respondents (52.7%) indicate they watch in the original language with subtitles in their own national language. This practice is particularly prevalent among Romanian young adults (67.4%), as well as in Denmark (62.2%) and Ireland (51.4%). In contrast, among Italian young adults there is a strong preference for dubbed version without subtitles (42.1%) over watching in the original language (33.9%) [TABLE 15].

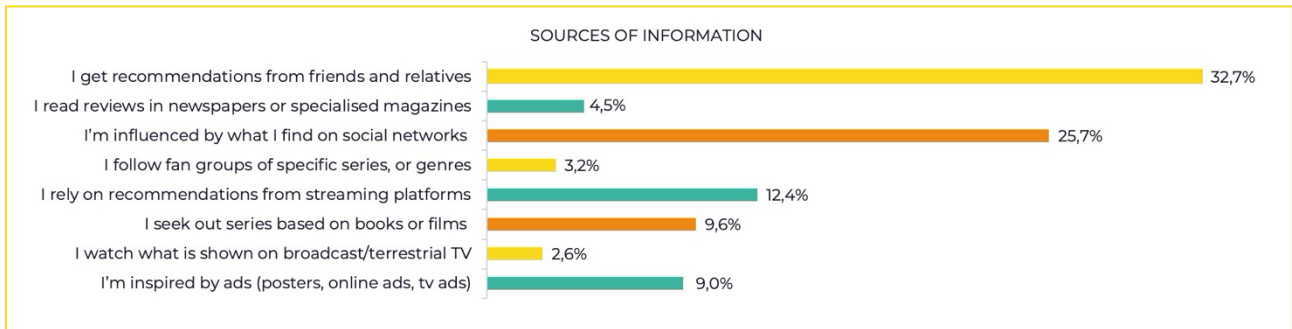


The viewing habits of serial dramas reveal little variation across different countries: young Europeans are notably picky (with 54% of respondent admitting they stop watching after just a few minutes or episodes if they don't like the series). However, they also display strong attachment to shows that capture their interest (42.1% engage in binge-watching, 42.2% rewatch seasons and episodes, and 38.2% revisit specific episodes). One in three (33.4%) watch multiple series concurrently, a trend more prevalent among young Danes (47.4%) and less so among Romanians (24.5%). The consumption of serial drama appears systematic, with 10.5% skipping randomly across episodes and 11.4% opting to spoil the ending before watching all episodes. Additionally, it is noteworthy that 40.3% of young Europeans combine viewing with other activities, echoing Morley's idea of "family television" (1986). This behaviour is particularly pronounced among Danes (60.5%), while less common among Romanians (29.4%) and Italians (33.3%) [TABLE 9].



Among the activities that young people report doing simultaneously with watching serial dramas, streaming events like Amazon Party appear to be really uncommon, with a total of 92.9% of respondents stating they join them "not at all" (72.3%) or "not very/much" (20.6%) [TABLE 17].

The final last question about young adults' consumption of serial dramas relates to how they discover new series to watch. Data reveal a clear preference for "word-of-mouth", with 32.7% of respondents relying on recommendations from friends and relatives. This influence is particularly strong among young Irish (40.4%). Additionally, more than a quarter of respondents (25.7%) report being influenced by social networks, a trend notably pronounced among Italian young adults (32.4%). To a lesser extent, and with no significant differences between countries, respondents mention relying on recommendations from streaming platforms (12.4%) or to actively seeking out series based on books or films they have already familiar with (9.6%) [TABLE 16].



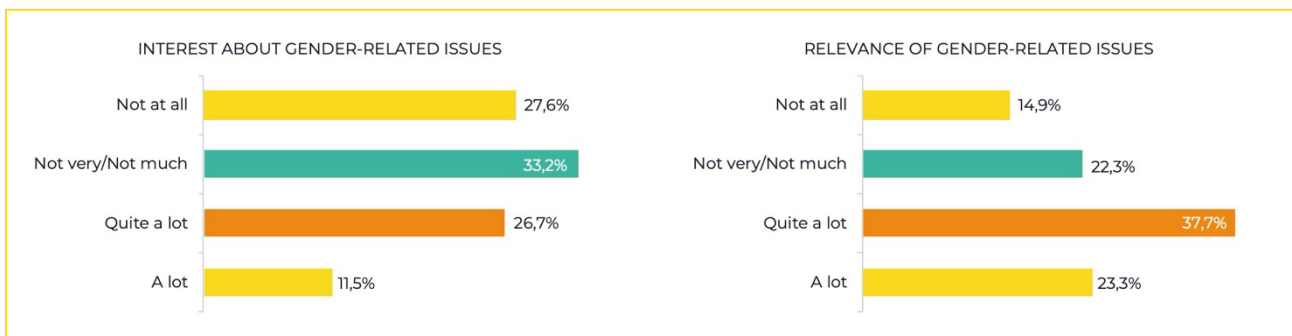
#### 4.4. Young adults' awareness about and interest in gender-related issues

The survey's second section aimed at measuring European young adults' awareness and interest in gender-related issues from a broad perspective, including their engagement with these issues in daily lives and within the school environment.

##### 4.4.1. Young Europeans? Differently interested in gender-related issues

Overall, the survey reveals a significant lack of interest among European young adults regarding gender-related issues. Specifically, 60.8% of respondents claim to be "not at all" (27.6%) or "not very" (33.2%) interested, while 38.2% express being interested "quite a lot" (26.7%) or "a lot" (11.5%). Disinterest is most pronounced among young Irish respondents (71.3%), whereas young Italians show the highest level of interest (56.2%) [TABLE 18].

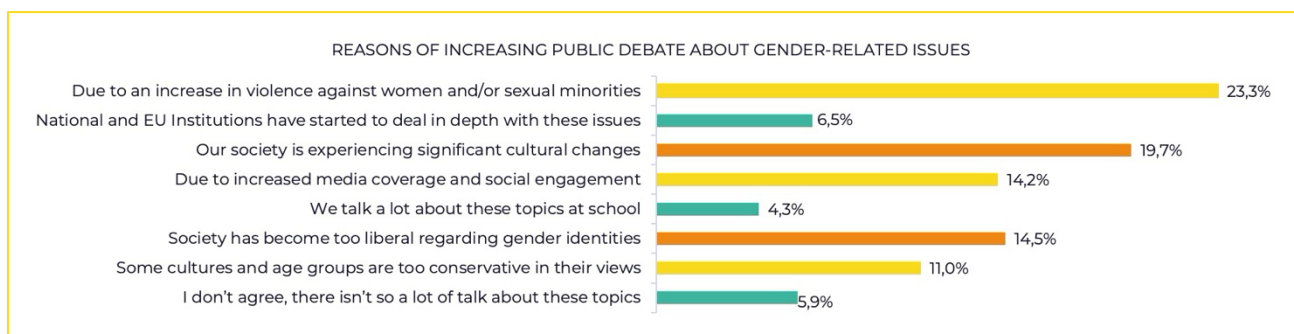
Despite the general lack of interest, it's noteworthy that young Europeans recognise the social importance of these issues, with 61% believing them to have "quite a lot" or "a lot" importance in today's society. Reflecting their higher interest in these matters, young Italians are particularly aware of this value (81%), likely influenced by recent events such as the highly publicised femicide case involving the teenage Giulia Cecchettin, which sparked widespread public debate and young activism against gender-based violence during the survey period [TABLE 19].



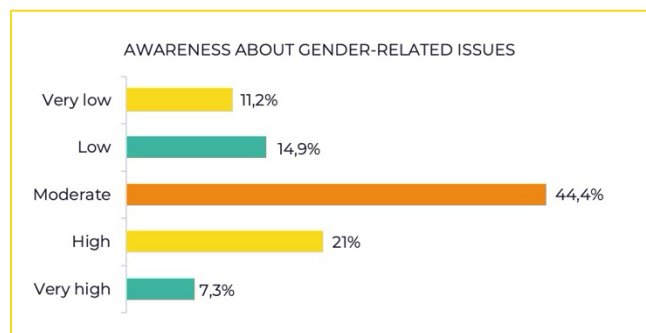
Supporting this sentiment, 32.2% of young Europeans, and especially Italians (34.9%), attribute the increased debate on gender-related issues to rising violence against women and sexual minorities. Additionally, about 1 in 5 respondents cite significant cultural shifts (19.7%), notably

highlighted by young Danes (23.3%), and increased media coverage and social engagement (14.2%), primarily noted among young Irish (20.8%). Conversely, opinions varying among young adults regarding societal attitudes toward gender-related issues. While 14.5% believe that “society has become too liberal regarding gender identities”, nearly an inverse percentage (11%) perceive that “some cultures and age groups are too conservative in their views on gender identities”

[TABLE 20].



Shifting the focus of analysis from a more general to a personal perspective, European young adults were asked to self-assess their level of awareness about gender-related issues. Almost half of them describe their awareness as “moderate” (44.4%). Conversely, in total more than a quarter rate their awareness as “high” (20.9%) or “very high” (7.3%). These percentages drop notably among Danish, who are the most self-critical; the majority rate their awareness as “low” (22%) or “very low” (28.2%) [TABLE 21].



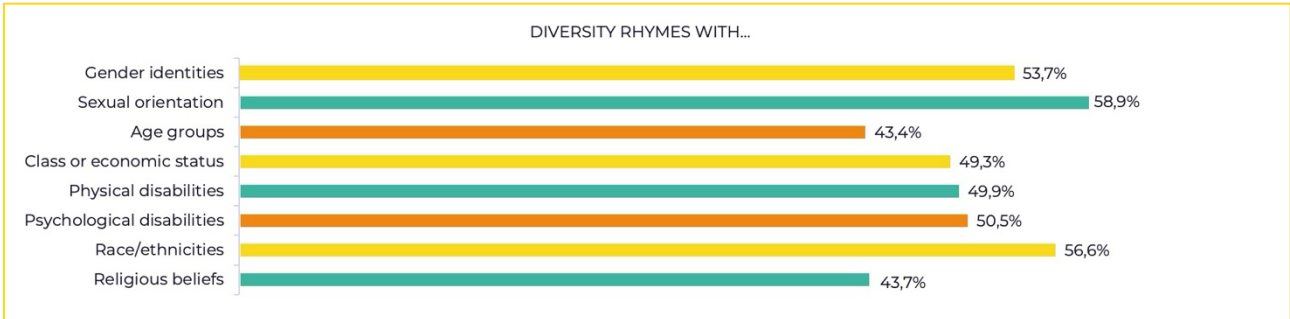
#### 4.4.2. If diversity rhymes with...

Turning to explore the main aspects that young Europeans associate with the concept of “diversity”, it becomes evident that the association covers a wide spectrum, reflecting the broader concept of intersectionality outlined by EU institutions.

Primarily, for young Europeans, diversity is associated with sexual orientation (58.9%) and gender identity (53.7%), particularly emphasised by young Italians (64.8% and 62.3% respectively), as well as with race and ethnicity (56.6%), notably among young Danes (62.9%).

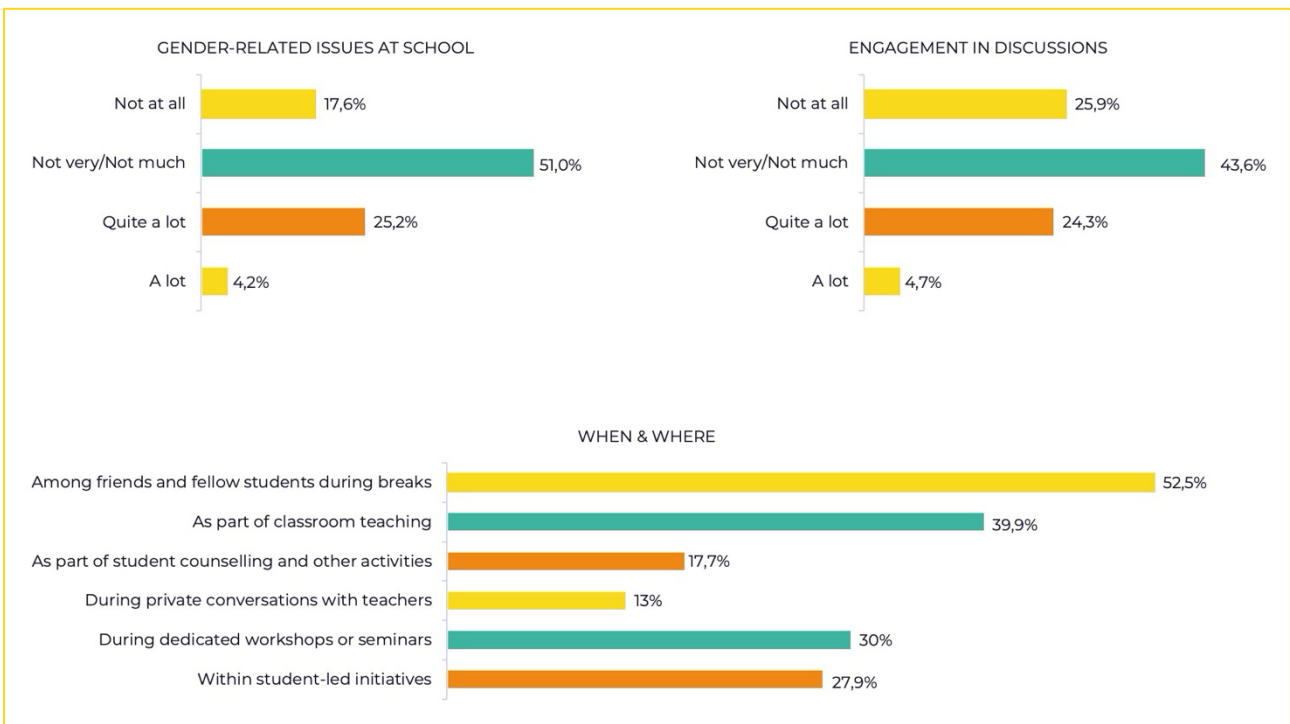
Moreover, half of the respondents associate diversity “quite a lot” and “a lot” with physical (49.9%) and mental disability (50.5%), as well as with class and economic status (49.3%). Associations with age groups and religious beliefs are slightly lower, standing at 43.4% and 43.7% respectively [TABLE 22].





#### 4.4.3. Gender-related issues at school

Turning to examine where young adults actively engage with gender-related issues, the school environment as a key setting. Approximately one-third young adults (29.4%) indicate that gender-related issues are discussed “quite a lot” or “a lot” at school, with a fairly uniform distribution across countries, except for Romania where this percentage drops to 16.1% [TABLE 23]. In terms of informal spaces for dialogue within school, overall half (52.5%) of respondents primarily discuss these issues with friends and peers during breaks. However, significant differences exist between countries. For instance, in Romania, informal peer exchanges dominate (72.5%), alongside private conversations with teachers (20.3%). In contrast, Danish (51.5%), Italian (48.8%), and Irish (46.6%) students highlight more structured approaches, including integration into school curricula. Irish students also emphasise workshops and seminars focused on gender-related issues (47.9%), while Italian students (44.4%) mention student-led initiatives [TABLE 24].



When focusing on individual inclinations to engage in discussions on gender-related issues within the school environment, the majority of respondents (69.5%) express little interest or reluctance, with Italian students as the notable exception, where nearly half (47.7%) are inclined to participate [TABLE 25]. Reasons for this reluctance vary, with a predominant lack of interest in gender-related issues cited (42%), ranging from 57.9% among young Danes to 28.9% among young Romanians [TABLE 26]. Conversely, among those interested in discussing gender-related issues, approximately half (50.5%) believe that school are pivotal in shaping opinions, particularly emphasised by young Italians (74.4%) [TABLE 27].

## 4.5. Serial dramas and gender narratives

The third section of the survey aimed to explore the interplay between serial dramas and gender-related issues, focusing on key topics such as relationships, stereotypes, and identity. The main goal as to detect European young adults' perceptions of these narratives as a potential source of normalisation or, conversely, of stigmatisation.

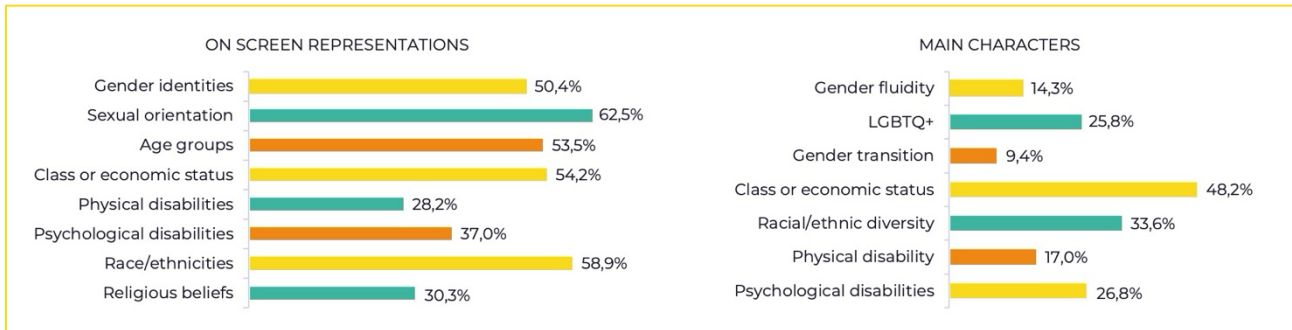
### 4.5.1. Serial dramas and diversity

A preliminary question explored by the survey concerns young adults' perceptions of the intersectional “diversity” portrayed in serial dramas.

According to young Europeans, the most important representation of diversity in serial dramas is related with sexual orientation (62.5%), a view more prevalent among young Italians (76.3%) and less so among young Irish (52%). Despite recognizing this representation of different sexual orientations, it is noteworthy that the young adults interviewed in the focus groups often described this inclusion as “forced”. They perceived the diversity of characters with different sexual orientations as a “moral imperative” pursued by serial dramas rather than a narratives-enhancing choice.

There is also a widespread perception that serial dramas generally lack diversity, particularly in terms of race and ethnicity (58.9%), although this view is less common among young Romanians (45.1%). This perception extends to social class and economic status (54.2%), with young Italians (60.1%) and Danes (58.8%) notably sharing this view. Approximately half of the respondents also observed diversity in age groups (53.5%) across various countries, as well as diversity in gender identities, with the highest recognition among young Italians (63.1%) and the lowest among young Irish (39.7%) [TABLE 28].

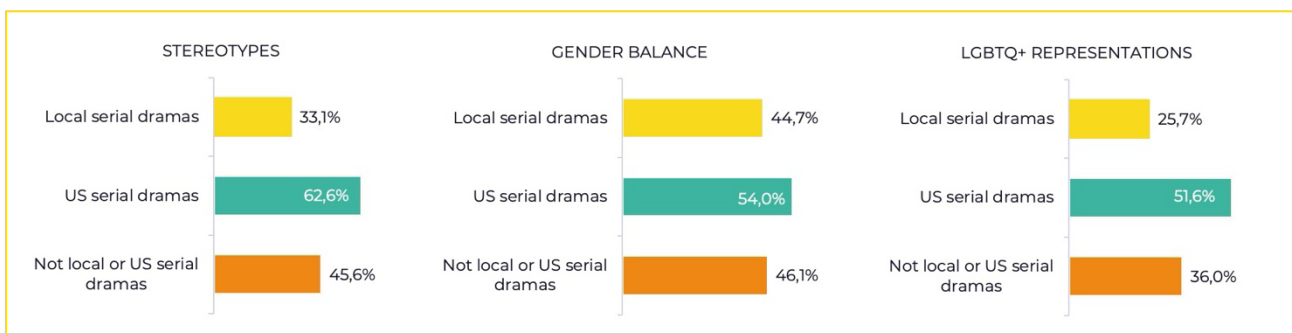
The survey also investigated whether and to what extent various aspects of diversity are primarily associated with or embodied by the lead characters depicted in serial dramas. Overall, young Europeans perceive a generally low representation of diversity among characters. However, there is an exception in terms of social class or economic status, with 48.2% of respondents associating this primarily with lead characters. This perception is particularly strong among young Italians (61.5%) and Danes (55%). Additionally, Italian young adults frequently associate main characters in serial dramas with racial/ethnic diversity (53.2%) – against the European average of 33.6%. In contrast, this association is much less pronounced among young Danes (6.2%). However, associations with psychological disability are quite outspoken in the Danish numbers compared to the others (24.8%) [TABLE 34].



#### 4.5.2. Dominant gender stereotypes in serial dramas

Focusing more specifically on the representation of gender stereotypes in serial dramas, young Europeans tend to have divergent opinions. At the macro level, the general perception is that US series are the most stereotypical (62.6%), compared to 33.1% who believe this of national series, a view particularly prevalent among young Italians (50.4%) [TABLE 30].

However, this perception changes at a micro level. When young adults are asked to identify specific stereotypes based on their personal viewing experiences, US series are seen as the most progressive. Specifically, more than half of the EU respondents agree that US series offer a more balanced representation of male and female characters (54%) and LGBTQ+ characters (51.6%), with even higher percentages among young Italians (66.9% and 62%, respectively). In contrast, local series receive more critical evaluations, particularly from young Irish and Romanians, who perceive a lower fair balance in the representation of male and female characters (37% and 35%, respectively). In Romania, this perception drops dramatically to 15.4% for the representation of LGBTQ+ characters [TABLE 32; TABLE 33].

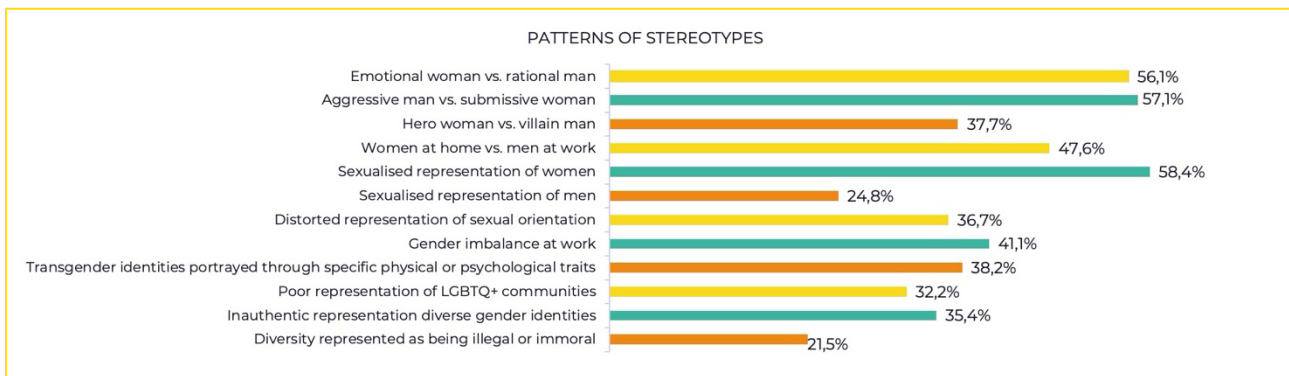


When focusing on the types of stereotypes that young Europeans perceive as most prevalent in serial dramas, those exceeding the symbolic threshold of 50% include the “sexualized representation of women” (58.4%) and the “aggressive man vs. submissive woman” stereotype (57.1%), both notably prevalent among young Italians (67.2% and 68.6%, respectively). Additionally, the stereotype of the “emotional woman vs. rational man”, acknowledged by 56.1% of respondents overall, is particularly prominent among young Danes (59.4%).

Within the realm of work-life balance, stereotypes such as “women at home vs. men at work” (47.6%) and “gender imbalance at work” (41.1%) are quite prevalent – particularly among young

Italians (58.2% and 49.6%, respectively). The dichotomy of “heroine woman vs. villain man” is mentioned by 37.7% of respondents, with young Romanians showing higher prevalence (50.3%). Regarding the stereotypical representation of gender identities and sexual orientations, about 2 out of 5 young Europeans mention the stereotype of transgender identities portrayed through specific physical or psychological traits (38.2%). The distorted representation of sexual orientation, the inauthentic representation of gender identities and the poor representation of LGBTQ+ communities are noted by 36.7%, 35.4% and 32.2% of respondents, respectively.

Lastly, below the symbolic threshold of 25%, two other stereotypes are identified: the sexualized portrayal of men (24.8%), which is less frequently mentioned by young Italians (20.9%), and the representation of diversity as illegal or immoral (21.5%), an opinion held by approximately 1 in 4 respondents in Italy (24.6%) and Romania (26.5%) [TABLE 31].



#### 4.5.3. The top stereotypical serial dramas

After identifying the main categories of stereotypes that EU young adults perceive as prevalent in serial dramas, which specific series do they consider to be the “most stereotypical”? An analysis of the open-ended question asking them to name the first title that came to their mind in this regard reveals interesting similarities and differences between countries<sup>12</sup>.

Although the number of mentions varies, the first notable finding is that *Sex Education* tops the list of serial dramas cited by young adults in all four countries. This series, which was frequently praised by young Europeans in focus groups for “normalizing” diversity, is also perceived as highly stereotypical. As discussions with students indicated, this perception is likely due to its use of stereotypes to address and dismantle barriers related to gender-related issues.

Other series perceived as stereotypical to varying extents by EU young students include *Euphoria* (most frequently cited by young Danes and Romanians), *Elite* (particularly by Italians), and

<sup>12</sup> A trend observed cross-sectionally across various countries, open-ended questions recorded the highest percentage of non-responses. In this regard, it should be noted the survey format with predetermined closed responses requires less effort to complete, whereas open-ended questions require greater involvement, which often conflicts with respondents’ expectations and can also be perceived as more intrusive than the more aseptic closed-ended questions. Given the high non-response rate, and therefore the lack of representativeness of the provided answers, it was decided not to include the analysis of open-ended questions, except where strictly necessary to justify a significant percentage of the responses linked to them. Although the open-ended questions tended to show significant rates of “non-response” – along with a high number of fields filled with “I don’t know/I don’t remember”, especially among young Danes – the evidence that emerged still provides valuable insights for interpreting and understanding the issues under investigation from a comparative perspective.

*Heartstopper* (especially among the Irish). While young Romanians and Irish tend to cite international or non-local serial dramas, national series are also among the most cited titles by Italians and Danes. For Italians, the most stereotyped series turn out to be *Mare fuori* and *Baby*, while Danes recognize a high degree of stereotyping in local series, among which *Ingen ängel*, and *Paradise Hotel*<sup>13</sup>.

#### 4.5.4. Empowering female lead characters

Focusing closely on the portrayal of female characters, European young adults were asked to name serial dramas they believe best depict women in strong and empowering roles. Despite different national contexts and varying preferences among respondents, this open-ended question received the highest response rate overall. This underscores a readiness among respondents to express their views on more progressive, or at least less stereotypical, representations of women.

Contrary to earlier findings, young Italians perceive female characters in foreign series primarily in strong roles, particularly those in *Shameless* (most frequently cited) and *La casa de papel* (with specific mentions of characters like Tokyo, Nairobi, and Alicia Sierra). This is followed by *Vis a Vis*, *Stranger Things*, and *Wonder Woman*. The only national series frequently mentioned is once again *Mare fuori*, especially in relation to the lead character of Rosa Ricci.

Conversely, young Danes mention strong female characters from both national series, such as *Rita*, and from a varied set of international series, from *Fleabag* to *She-Hulk*, from *Gilmore Girls* to *Stranger things*, from *Wonder Woman* to *Grey's Anatomy*. The latter two are also particularly cited by young Romanians, closely followed by series like *Griselda* and *Game of Thrones*. Young Irish respondents offer a slightly different perspective, attributing roles of female empowerment to series such as *She-ra: Princess of Power*, *Succession*, and *Supergirl*, alongside the aforementioned *Wonder Woman*, which stands out across the four different countries.

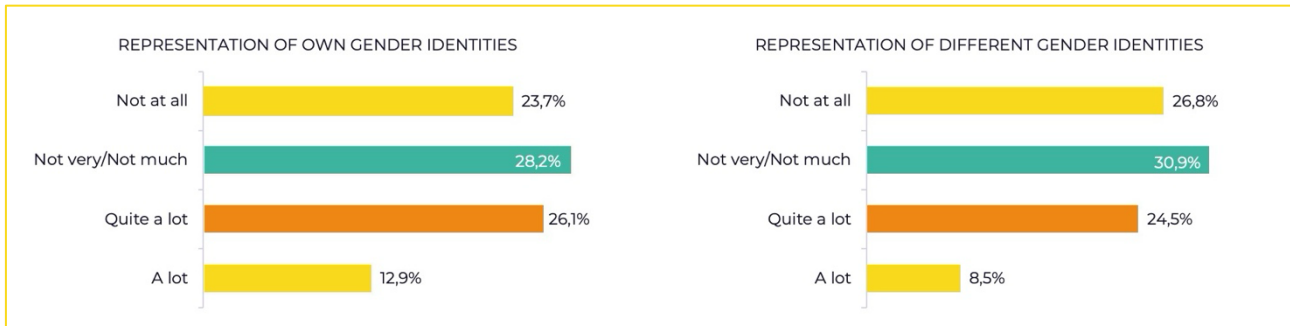
#### 4.5.5. Identity & generational portrayal

Turning to how European young adults perceive serial drama in faithfully representing aspects of their identity and of their generation, the data reveal divergent opinions across countries.

Starting from the micro-level of identity representations, approximately half (51.9%) of respondents believe it is either “not at all” or “not very” important for serial dramas to depict characters of their own gender identity or sexual orientation in empowering roles. Conversely, 39% view this representation more positively, with higher percentages recorded among young Romanians (47.7%) [TABLE 35].

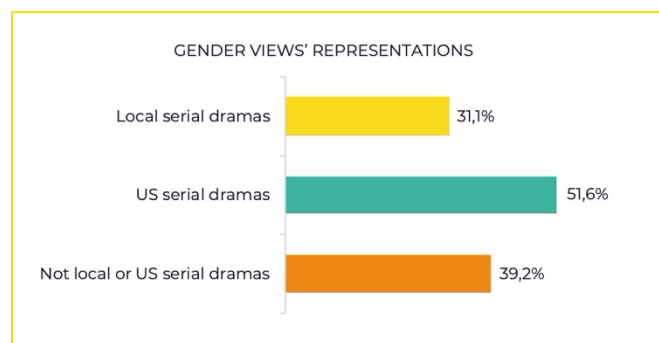
On the other hand, the idea of seeing characters of different gender identities or sexual orientations in equally empowering roles is considered even less significant overall (33%), particularly among young Italians (53.5%) and Romanians (68.3%). This reflects a broader trend towards the “normalization of diversity”, which emerged consistently across various focus groups [TABLE 36].

<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that young Danes often quote the Swedish series *Ingen ängel*, suggesting the idea that the “local perspective” in Denmark involves all the Nordic area. Conversely, *Paradise Hotel* is not a serial drama, but a reality show, based on an international format. Also in this case, it is interesting that young Danes quote it among the most stereotype media product with which they engage.



Confirming previous observations about US series, which young Europeans acknowledge for their progressive approach to gender-related issues, they also recognize a significant improvement in the representation of diversity within US serial dramas over recent years (61.8%). Moreover, 40% of young Europeans believe that a similar positive change has occurred also in national series, with this perception notably strong among young Italians (50.7%) and less prevalent among young Romanians (25.8%) [TABLE 37].

Shifting the focus from the micro-level of identity representations to the macro-level of generational perspectives, US serial dramas again assert their dominance. Approximately half of young Europeans (51.6%) believe that US series are most effective in representing their generation's views on gender-related issues. This sentiment is particularly strong among young Italians (63.6%), while slightly lower among young Irish (43.2%) and Danish (41.6%) respondents. Conversely, when considering national serial dramas, about one-third (31.1%) of young adults believe these series accurately represent their generation's views on gender-related issues. Among them, young Italians (28%) and Danes (35.4%) express the most confidence, while the Irish (26%) and Romanians (23.9%) are more critical in this regard [TABLE 38].



Focusing on the main motivations behind these contrasting views, the higher criticism voiced by Romanians and Irish is confirmed by their perception that their local series refer to a societal model perceived as distant from their generation (23.1% and 17.7%, respectively) [TABLE 39]. In contrast, the positive perception from young Danes and Italians is reinforced by their belief that national serial dramas effectively represent the diversity of opinions, beliefs, and lifestyles typical of their generation (22% and 20.7%, respectively) [TABLE 40].

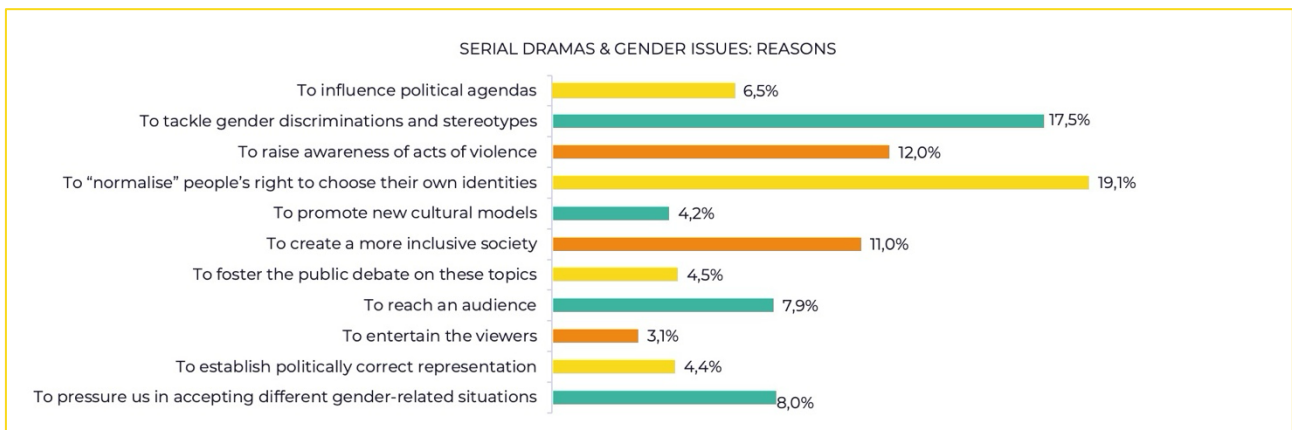
#### 4.5.6. Why do serial dramas address gender-related issues?

The section of the survey focused on the relationship between serial dramas and gender-related issues ended with a question based directly on the insights that emerged across the focus groups. This question asks why, in the opinion of young Europeans, serial drama increasingly and more frequently tend to address gender-related issues. Given the items' typology and the possibility of

selecting up to three answers, the results of this question are not easily interpretable. However, it is possible to highlight some significant trends.

Overall, “altruistic” motivations clearly prevail, confirming the idea that serial dramas represent powerful tools both for combating gender stereotypes and building more inclusive societies (cf. [EU Gender Equality Strategy](#)). However, it is noteworthy that only 17.5% of respondents prioritize a negative approach, indicating the primary motivation is “to tackle gender discriminations and stereotypes”. In contrast, young Europeans seem to approach serial dramas favouring the positive aspect of *building* rather than the negative aspect of *fighting*: indeed, 12% believe that, by addressing gender-related issues, serial dramas contribute to raising awareness towards acts of violence, 11% to create a more inclusive society, and 4.2% to promote new cultural models.

Another significant motivation attributes both an “individual” and “social” dimension to the interplay between serial dramas and gender-related issues. The response that received the highest number of mentions in all countries relates to a topic widely discussed in the focus groups, namely the process of normalizing these issues in daily life: 19.1% of respondents believe that serial dramas address gender-related issues to normalize people’s right to choose their own identities, while 8% answered “to pressure us into accepting different gender-related situations”. In their proactive drive to build a gender-inclusive society, young Europeans do not identify a space for dialogue between the media industry and political institutions. Only 6.5% believe that serial dramas address gender-related issues with the aim of influencing political agendas. This response shows significant differences among countries: young Irish respondents trust more than their Italian peers (11% vs. 2.1%) in the power of serial dramas to engage with politicians and institutions. In this scenario, it is noteworthy that a very low number of respondents identify more selfish reasons, primarily related to the need to capture audiences (7.9%) or to entertain viewers (3.1%) [\[TABLE 29\]](#).

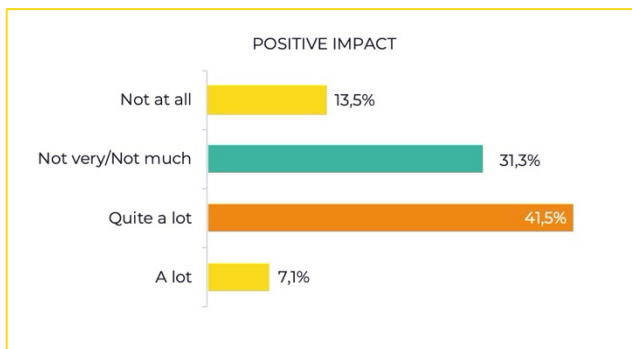


#### 4.6. The influence of serial dramas

The last section of the survey focused specifically on the perceived influence of serial dramas on gender-related issues, aiming to investigate how and to what extent these narratives contribute to shaping the daily life and experiences of European young adults.

#### 4.6.1. The impact of gender narratives on society

Beginning with a broader perspective, the first focus of analysis aimed at investigating European young adults' opinions on whether and how serial dramas positively impact people's attitudes and understanding of gender roles in society. Reflecting the dual nature of serial dramas, perceived as able to both tackle or reinforce gender stereotypes, respondents' views are divided on this matter. While 48.6% acknowledge the significant positive social effect of serial dramas, an equally significant 44.8% express more critical views [TABLE 41].



This criticism is particularly prevalent among young Irish respondents (50.7%), who believe that serial dramas are not a source of inspiration for their everyday life and may reinforce outdated societal models (18.5% respectively) [TABLE 42].

Conversely, the more optimistic attitude of young Italians (53.5%) and Romanians (58.5%) towards the positive impact of serial dramas is also reflected in the added value they attribute

to these audiovisual products as “shapers” of the public debate, particularly in raising awareness in respect of gender-related issues (25.3% Italians; 24.6% Romanians), as well as prompting people to reconsider their views about gender roles (22% and 23% respectively) [TABLE 43].

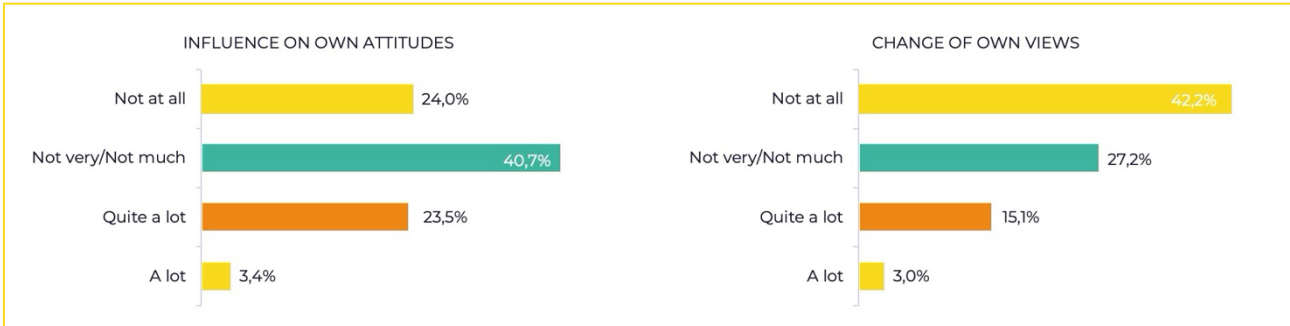
Finally, young Danes appear to be the most evenly divided group, with 44% denying and 45.4% recognising the positive impact of serial dramas on the societal reception of gender-related issues [TABLE 41]. Among those who hold a negative attitude, the prevailing opinion is that serial dramas have limited influence in shaping cultural attitudes towards gender-related issues (16.8%) and may perpetuate gender stereotypes or fail to raise awareness of gender-related issues (16.4%) [TABLE 42]. Among those who perceive a positive impact, however, more than 1 in 5 respondents (22.6%) believe that serial dramas prompt people to reconsider their views on gender roles. It is also noteworthy that 19.8% highlight how serial dramas could positively contribute to boosting the self-esteem of those who perceive themselves (or are labelled) as “diverse” [TABLE 43].

#### 4.6.2. From society to individuals: a matter of “emotional influence”

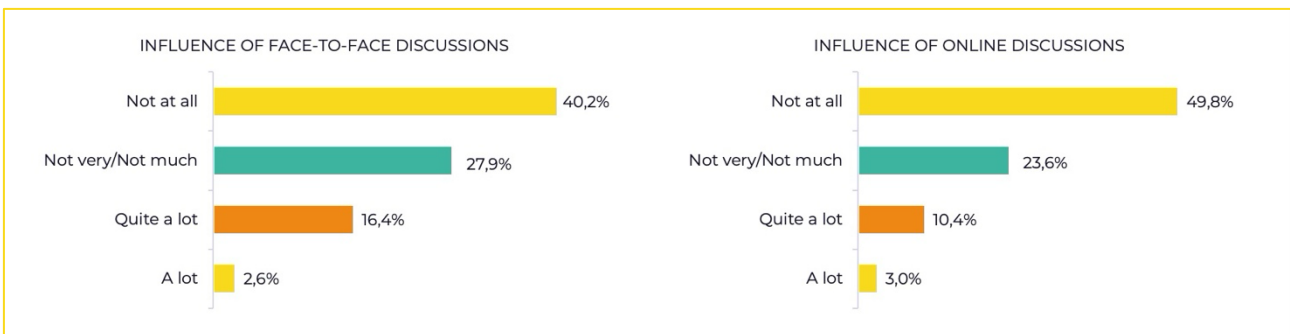
Turning from general views to more personal experiences, it is noteworthy that young Europeans attribute to serial dramas a limited influence. The majority of respondents state that serial dramas have influenced their attitudes and behaviours either “not very/not much” (40.7%) or “quite a lot” (23.5%). About a quarter (24%) affirm their behaviours have been influenced “not at all” by the serial dramas they have watched [TABLE 45].

This limited influence emerges also when the survey asks young Europeans if their views on gender and diversity have changed due to serial dramas' storytelling. 69.4% respond with “not at all” or “not very/not much,” with no significant differences between countries [TABLE 53].

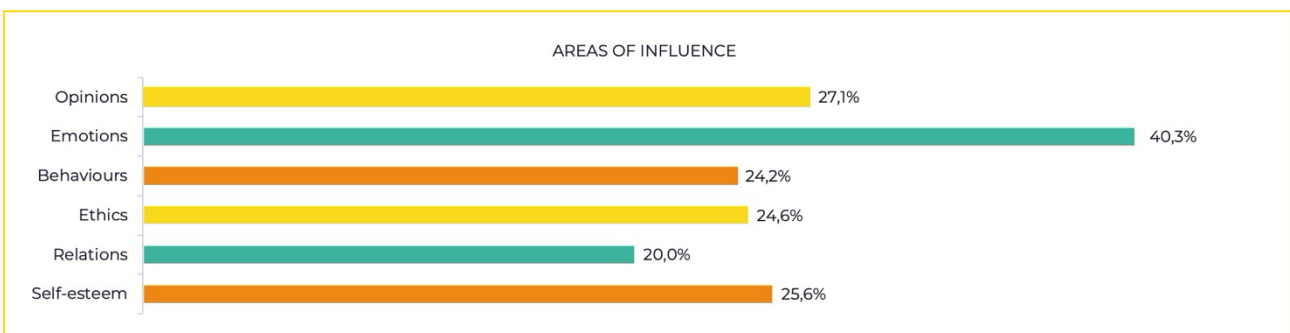




Furthermore, young Europeans do not recognize changing their views on gender and diversity due to discussions about serial dramas with parents, friends, or teachers (68.1%) or due to online discussions (73.4%) [TABLE 54, TABLE 55].



Looking at the personal dimensions more or less influenced by serial dramas narrative on gender-related issues, overall, they primarily impact on an emotional level (40.3%). Young Italians (51.8%) and Romanians (41.8%) stand out as the most affected by this emotional influence. Additionally, approximately 1 in 4 young Europeans feel they have experienced significant influence from serial dramas on the rational level, impacting their opinions (27.1%), ethics (24.6%) and behaviour (24.2%). However, a closer examination by country reveals that young Danes hold contrasting views to the general perception, exhibiting widespread scepticism about the power of serial dramas to influence gender-related issues at any levels, except for the emotional level, which 1 in 3 respondents (33%) mention. Moreover, compared to the European average where 1 in 4 young adults (25.6%) admit to experiencing the influence of serial dramas on their self-esteem, this percentage rises notably to 34.6% among young Romanians [TABLE 46].



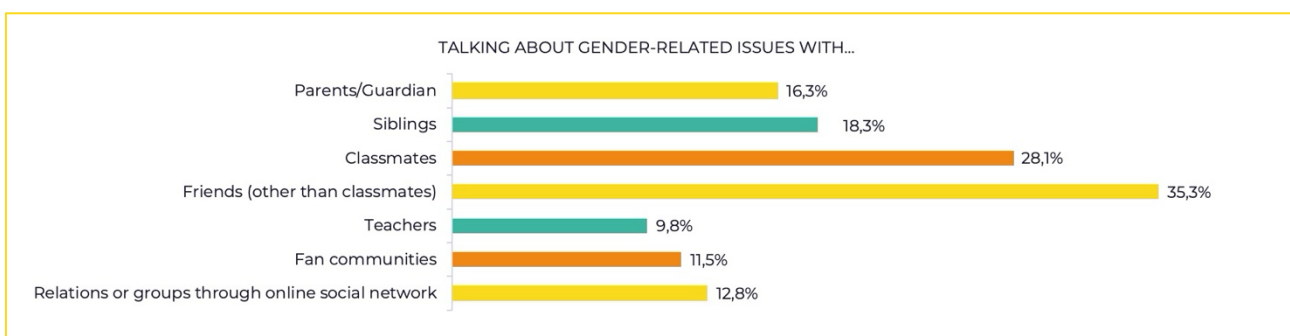
#### 4.6.3. Exploring youth dialogues on serial dramas and gender-related issues

Among European young adults, the most common venues (and related people) for discussing how serial dramas deal with gender-related issues predominately involve peers, with a total of 81.7% of respondents indicating this preference overall. Specifically, 35.3% of respondents say they discuss these topics mainly with their friends, a habit particularly prevalent among young Italians (45.8%) and Romanians (48.3%). Additionally, 28.1% discuss these issues primarily at school with their classmates, with higher rates in Italy (36.9%) and Romania (33.6%), and lower rates in Ireland (13.7%).

Young Italians are also more likely to discuss the interplay between serial dramas and gender-related issues with their siblings (27.8%), while young Danes (10.7%) are less likely to do so. In contrast, discussing these topics with adults is less prevalent. Young Romanians (20.2%) are the most likely to discuss them with their parents or guardians, whereas young Irish are the least inclined to engage in such dialogue within their households (6.2%), compared to the overall average of 16.3%.

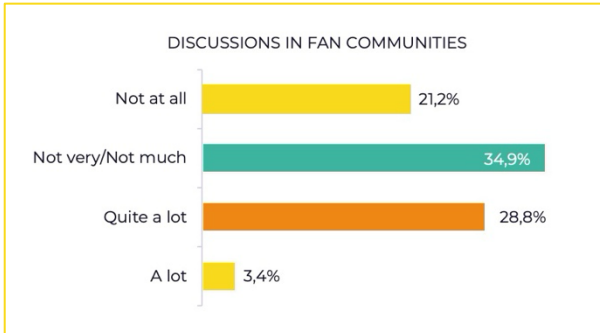
Conversely, teachers appear to be less involved in these discussions, with only 9.8% of respondents mentioning them as discussion partners. This percentage varies, with a higher mention among young Italians (16.2%) and a lower one among young Irish (6.2%). These findings contrast somewhat with insights from in-depth interviews with teachers across various countries, where many reported positive experiences discussing gender-related issues in classrooms, often using serial dramas as a starting point. They also emphasised their crucial role in supporting young adults, often acting as mediators with parents, who tend to become involved in discussions about these topics later than peers and teachers.

Finally, approximately 1 in 4 young Europeans usually discuss the relationship between serial drama and gender-related issues online (24.3% overall). Among these, 12.8% prefer to discuss mainly with friends or within social network groups, while 11.5% usually engage in discussions within specific fan communities [TABLE 50].



#### 4.6.4. Fan communities: a gender talk hub?

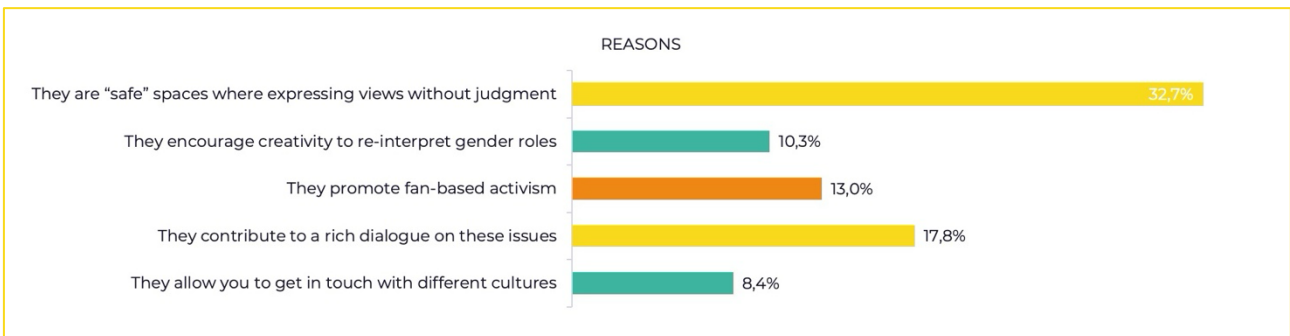
The survey delved deeper into the realm of fan communities, assessing their effectiveness in discussing and exploring gender-related issues. More than half of the respondents (56.1%) considered fan communities to be either “not at all” (21.2%) or “not very” (34.9%) effective in this regard, with no significant differences observed between countries. However, around 1 in 3 European young adults (32.2%) perceive fan communities as effective places for these discussions [TABLE 51].



Among those who view fan communities positively, the primary motivation is that they are seen as “safe” spaces where individuals can express opinions without fear of judgement (32.7%). This sentiment is particularly strong among young Romanians (39.2%) and Danes (37.1%). Another perspective, though less prevalent, is that fan communities facilitate rich dialogues on gender-related issues, noted by

17.8% of respondents. This viewpoint is more common among young Italians (29.2%) but less among young Irish (6.7%). Conversely, young Irish respondents are more likely to believe that fan communities can promote fan-based activism (18.3%), whereas young Danes are less inclined to share this belief (8.1%).

Regarding other potential benefits, 15.6% of Romanians believe that fan communities encourage creativity in reinterpreting gender roles, a perspective less emphasised in other countries. Additionally, there is no significant positive association between the experience of dialogue within fan communities and the opportunity to get in touch with other cultures, mentioned by only 8.4% of respondents overall [TABLE 52].



#### 4.6.5. Empowering European young adults: insights on gender representations in serial dramas

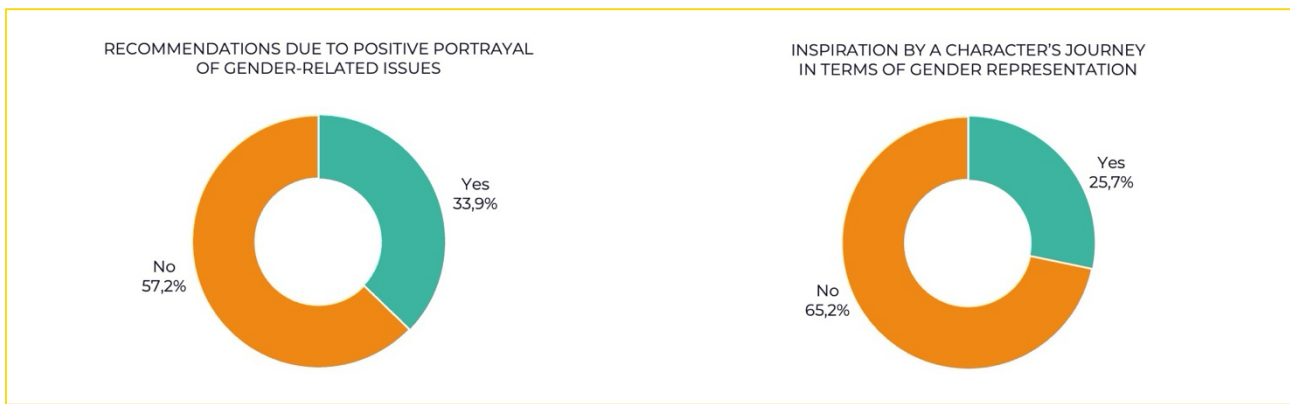
The survey also aimed to motivate young Europeans to identify serial dramas that they believed portrayed gender-related issues positively or significantly, both on a social or personal level. Due to the extensive range of questions on these topics, particular attention was given to open answers related to three key areas – representations, characters, and issues – which gained the most respondent participation.

Firstly, respondents were asked if they had ever recommended serial dramas because of their positive portrayal of gender-related issues. Despite 57.2% responding negatively overall, it is noteworthy that more than one in three respondents (33.9%) actively provided recommendations. This percentage rises to 46.4% among young Romanians, but is lower among young Danes, with approximately 24.7% providing recommendations [TABLE 47].

Analysing the titles provided by respondents, it is evident that their recommendations primarily centred around international productions. Specifically, the most frequently mentioned serial dramas by European young adults across all four countries include *Sex Education*, *Heartstopper*, and *Euphoria*. *Sex Education* and *Heartstopper* are particularly cited by young Danes and

Italians, while *Euphoria* is the top choice among young Romanians. Notably, young Romanians offer a broad range of international titles over national productions. In contrast, Italians tend to recommend national productions such as *Mare fuori* (which lead the list), *Prisma* and *Un professore*. Lastly, young Irish respondents mention more US series, notably *The Umbrella Academy*.

Shifting the focus from sharing and word-of-mouth to personal experiences, approximately 1 in 4 young Europeans (25.7%) claim to have been inspired by a character’s journey in terms of gender representation [TABLE 48].



Examining the most frequently mentioned characters, they span across the previously recommended series and include new series that vary by country. Characters from *Sex Education*, for instance, feature prominently: Maeve Wiley (mentioned by young Italians and Danes), Eric Effiong (cited by Danish and Romanian), Otis Milburn (only by Danes), and Aimee Gibbs (only by Irish). From *Euphoria*, Jules Vaughn stands out as the inspirational character, cited by Italians, Danes, and Romanians. *Heartstopper* characters like Elle Argent (mentioned by Italians and Irish), Nick Nelson (by Danes), and Kit Connor (by Irish) also receive notable recognition. The *Umbrella Academy*'s Victor Hargreeves is highlighted by young Irish respondents for his influential role.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that the *SKAM* characters mentioned by Italians and Danes refer to their respective national versions: Martino Rametta and Eva Brighi in the Italian series; Noora Amalie Sætre, Sana Bakkoush, and Isak Valtersen in the Norwegian series, mentioned by young Danes. Additionally, characters from new series emerge: Wilhelm from *The Young Royals* is cited by young Danes and Romanians, while Annalise Keating from *How to Get Away with Murder* inspires young Italians and Romanians. *Grey's Anatomy*, popular among young Romanians, features characters like Meredith Grey (also mentioned by Italians), Arizona Robbins, and Callie Torres.

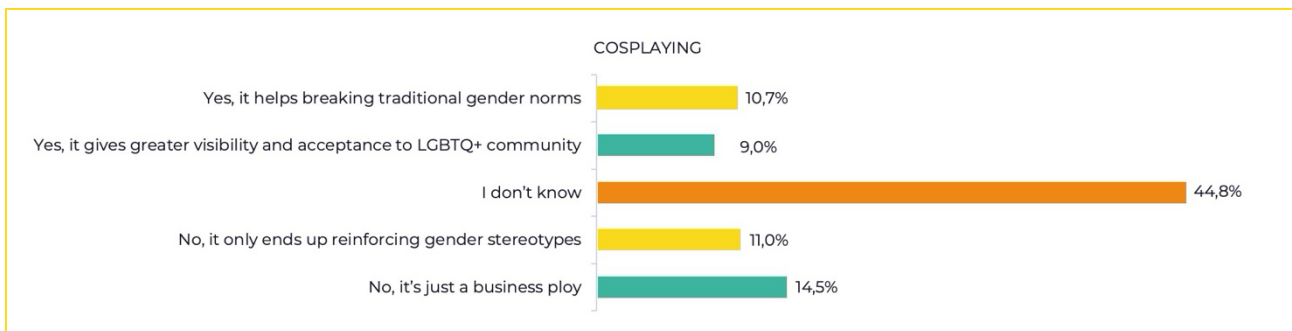
#### 4.6.6. Exploring cosplaying’s role in shaping gender attitudes

Shifting the focus from passive viewing to active interpretation of serial dramas’ characters – particularly those that young adults identify as sources of inspiration on gender-related issues – the survey also investigates *whether* and *to what extent* the phenomenon of cosplaying is widespread among the EU young adults, and what positive or negative implications they attribute to it.

The research focus originates from reflections shared during the focus groups. When discussing the influence of serial dramas, high school students frequently mentioned the impact of trends in fashion, language, attitudes, and behaviours. Clothing, in particular, emerged as a powerful mode of expression to convey important messages. As one young girl noted, «*It often happens that one day you dress like one series and the next day you dress like another*».

However, this evidence is not clearly reflected in the survey data. When asked about cosplaying and whether character costumed role-playing can promote positive awareness and attitudes towards gender-related issues, most respondents did not seem to have a clear idea. A notable 44.8% answered “I don’t know”, with this percentage rising to 51.2% among young Italians. Despite this general uncertainty, about 1 in 5 young Europeans (19.7%) attribute a positive role to cosplaying, believing that it contributes to breaking traditional gender norms (10.7%) and to giving greater visibility and acceptance to the LGBTQ+ community (9%).

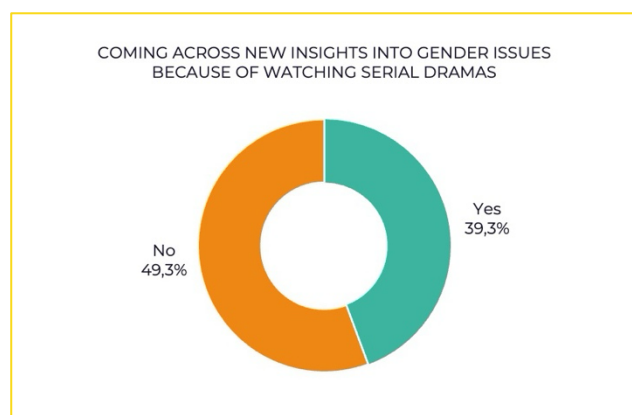
Conversely, more than 1 in 4 respondents (25.5%) view cosplaying negatively, considering it merely a business ploy (14.5%) or believing that it reinforces gender stereotypes (11%) [TABLE 49].



#### 4.6.7. Serial dramas as effective learning tools

Lastly, an additional compelling aspect explored by the survey focuses on the potential learning processes prompted by serial dramas on gender-related issues. Approximately 39.3% of respondents reported that watching certain serial dramas helped them discover new gender-related issues and deepen their understanding of specific topics [TABLE 56]. Analysing open-ended responses to this question revealed the issues on which European young adults felt they had improved their knowledge, as well as the topics on which serial dramas specifically helped raise their awareness and focus their interest.

At a broader level of analysis, young adults interviewed across all four countries highlighted how the serial dramas they watched expanded their understanding of various aspects of gender identity and sexual orientation. This exposure has allowed them to move beyond traditional frameworks. For instance, two participants described it as entering «*the big world of popular genres*» [IT, 16] and realizing that «*the world is a diverse place with many different types of people*» [IRL, 16]. This awareness was



particularly pronounced among young Italians, who specifically mention becoming aware of “new” sexual orientations such as demisexuality and pansexuality, as well as the concept of “aromantic orientation”.

Another topic where all respondents claimed to have learned more is transsexuality. Interestingly, increased awareness and understanding of this issue were primarily linked to gaining insights into the challenges transgender individuals encounter in their daily lives. These challenges range from personal struggles such as *«dealing with the deadname»* [DEN, 19] to broader societal issues like *«challenges for transgender people when it comes to changing in sports»* [IT, 17]. Such difficulties often have significant implications for social inclusion processes, with some cases tragically resulting in *«lack of acceptance that tragically results in suicide»* [RO, 18].

Gender transition is another emerging area of interest for young Europeans, with serial dramas playing a significant role in describing and exploring it. Particularly noteworthy is the focus on understanding the motivations behind this choice, described as *«both a matter of people’s wants but also mental changes»* [IRL, 17]. According to European young adults, serial narratives often highlight the *«struggles of coming out»* [IRL, 16], focusing on the *«psychological states of mind of those who do not feel themselves and are therefore excluded»* [IT, 18].

Intimacy, sexuality, and broader sex education are other areas where young Europeans have expanded their knowledge due to serial dramas’ storytelling. Some focus groups highlighted a perceived lack of attention to these topics in the educational system. Answering the survey’s related question, young Europeans emphasized that serial dramas offer opportunities to discuss sex education topics, such as *«the importance of starting sex education from childhood»* [RO, 18], and shedding light on *«the role of parents in raising awareness among young people»* [DEN, 17].

## Conclusions

The main findings from the two phases of our research highlight the complex and diverse nature of the topic under study, as well as the challenges and potentials associated with the subsequent phases of training on and learning about gender-related issues through the lens of serial drama. To understand how European young adults approach the representation of diversity – from an intersectional perspective – and more in particular of gender-related issues portrayed by serial narratives, it is important to first define the type of “publics” they represent.

Being characterised by highly personalized consumption habits, and engaging with content through a logic of transmediality, EU youth audiences are not merely target or recipients, *affected* or *influenced by* serial narratives, but rather *active* and *conscious actors* who critically engage with the content, often renegotiating serial representations based on their existing competencies, experiences, opinions and knowledge of these issues.

These skills are closely tied to the marked activism, typical of this generation, where inclusive attitudes prevail, despite challenges posed by educational gaps and societal norms. This attitude also influences their approach to (and interpretation of) serial dramas addressing gender-related issues, emphasizing a preference for narratives that normalize diversity rather than being explicitly educational.

The main findings of the research should be interpreted through this specific generational lens. Specifically, the quantitative data – which aim to measure opinions, trends, and behaviors – often show a general division on the broader issues discussed: there is a split in both the expressed interest in gender-related issues and the acknowledgment of the role of serial drama in promoting or normalizing these ones. Similarly, there is a division in the inclination to actively engage in public discourse on these topics, with peers being viewed as the main conversation partners, while educational institutions, especially schools, are seen as less influential role.

While interest in gender-related issues varies among young Europeans, they predominantly link them with the topics of sexual orientation and gender identities – and only to a lesser extent with the more factual aspects of gender equality, starting from, for example, the gender pay gap – and the same goes with the broad concept of “diversity”. However, this varied interest in gender-related issues is balanced by a transversal recognition of their social value, especially when they are linked to particularly relevant news cases that closely affect their generation, and which young adults also want to see represented in serial drama.

As indicated by the findings from focus groups and confirmed by the survey, serial dramas are generally seen as having little impact on shaping gender perspectives. Instead, and in line with a long tradition of empirical research in the field of sociological studies concerning media effects, they often reinforce existing views rather than inspiring change. Interest and engagement among EU young adults seem to be largely shaped by real-life experiences, rather than serial dramas representations.

However, it's crucial to emphasize that young Europeans agree that serial dramas primarily affect them on an emotional level, also in coherence with publics' main feature in the era of platform society. This is particularly important when structuring effective training courses to stimulate critical discussions on gender-related issues through serial narratives.

Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the emotional impact also plays a central role in what young adults report learning from serial dramas. At a broader level of analysis, young adults from all countries highlighted how the serial dramas they watched had deepened their understanding of various aspects of gender identity and sexual orientation. From this point of view, they specifically noted how these narratives address the emotional challenges faced by individuals striving for acceptance in a society that tends to label them as “diverse”.

The issue of “normalizing diversity”, which consistently arises throughout both phases of the research across all participating countries, has been mentioned by young adults for its significance in the representations portrayed in serial dramas, as well as in their personal experiences in daily life. This latter aspect is particularly evident from the interviews with teachers. As primary observers of young students, teachers often turn out to be a fundamental reference point in gathering their confidences and supporting them in the difficult journeys of self-acceptance and normalization that they experience in their lives.

While the existence of a generation gap between students and teachers/trainers is often highlighted, it is equally important to emphasize the willingness of trainers to get in touch with the world of young adults, also by employing the language and cultural references familiar to their students. This is also evident in their positive approach to integrating serial dramas into their teaching activities, viewing them as effective tools for facilitating classroom discussions on themes, characters, and narratives that are meaningful to students’ lives.

This aspect is particularly compelling, as it shows how serial dramas are perceived as a valuable tool to support and, in some cases, innovate traditional learning methods, despite the “open challenges” mainly due to the lack of institutional support and resources.

Overall, the shared aspiration for civil rights and gender equality across Europe was evident. Additionally, the recognized dual role of serial dramas as both a “mirror” reflecting society and a “shaper” influencing attitudes and perceptions appears to be highly promising. These points underscore the importance of pursuing the goals of the GEMINI project and supporting efforts to foster safe educational environments where gender-related issues are openly addressed and normalized.



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## Appendix – Survey's tables

Table 1. Gender identity	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Man	37.9	48.6	35.5	34.6	38.9
Woman	56.0	40.4	61.7	57.2	54.3
Trans man	0.3	3.4	0.6	0.7	1.2
Trans woman	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.2
Non-binary	0.7	1.4	0.6	1.3	1.0
Genderqueer	1.0	0.7	0.0	1.0	0.6
Agender	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.3
Gender fluid	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.6
No answer	3.4	3.4	1.0	4.2	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2. Sexual orientation	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Asexual	1.4	4.1	1.7	12.4	4.8
Bisexual	9.3	5.5	5.5	6.9	6.7
Gay/Lesbian	3.1	6.2	2.8	2.6	3.6
Heterosexual	77.7	72.6	85.7	61.4	74.8
Pansexual	2.1	4.1	1.9	0.7	2.2
Demisexual	1.7	2.1	0.9	1.7	1.5
No answer	4.7	5.4	1.5	14.3	6.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3. Age groups	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
15-16	7.6	48.7	20.4	28.4	26.0
17-18	65.0	47.9	74.5	56.3	61.6
Over 18	24.7	0.7	5.0	6.5	8.9
No answer	2.7	2.7	0.1	8.8	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4. Geographical location	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Large cities	67.4	15.9	36.5	76.7	48.7
Medium/small town	29.9	84.1	62.6	23.3	50.4
No answer	2.7	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5. How often do you watch serial dramas?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Every day	30.6	19.2	18.2	16.0	20.8
Two-three times per week	26.8	21.9	14.0	19.3	20.1
Only on weekends	5.8	8.9	6.3	11.1	8.0
Usually during school holidays	3.8	4.1	13.2	12.1	8.6
There is no rule, sometimes I don't watch at all	33.0	43.8	48.3	41.5	42.0
No answer	0.0	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6. On which channels or platforms do you usually watch serial dramas? [Percentage of "Yes"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Netflix	92.1	87.7	84.3	86.6	87.5
HBO Max	54.0	2.7	2.5	30.1	21.2
Disney+	58.4	58.2	44.1	40.2	49.8
Amazon Prime Video	19.2	48.6	67.8	10.5	38.0
Now Tv/Sky	3.1	22.6	19.8	2.3	12.3
Local public service providers	41.6	19.2	46.8	31.0	35.3
Apple TV	10.3	10.3	6.1	3.6	7.4
TikTok	39.5	58.9	53.4	53.6	51.5
Illegal websites	0.3	32.2	43.8	26.5	26.8
Other local viewer platform	30.6	17.8	34.4	20.3	26.2

Table 7. How do you usually watch serial dramas?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
With my family	10.0	16.4	16.3	8.8	13.0
With friends/partner	16.5	8.9	7.4	16.0	12.0
Alone	72.5	69.9	76.3	74.9	73.6
No answer	1.0	4.8	0.0	0.3	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 8. Why do you like watching serial dramas?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
I'm fond of serial dramas	14.1	11.7	16.1	39.9	20.5
They are entertaining	46.8	49.8	50.2	22.1	42.3
They help me escape from everyday life	24.1	11.4	10.7	19.8	16.3
Everyone is watching serial dramas	0.5	3.6	0.6	1.6	1.5
They allow me to connect with other cultures	1.9	1.8	2.5	3.4	2.4
They deal with topics and issues that interest me	11.6	9.3	19.8	12.6	13.7
I only watch them because part of the school curriculum	0.7	8.5	0.1	0.6	2.3
No answer	0.3	3.9	0.0	0.0	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.023.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 9. To what extent do you happen to: [Percentage of "Quite a lot" + "A lot"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Watch/binge whole seasons all in a row	43.6	39.1	39.1	47.0	42.1
Skip randomly across episodes and seasons	8.2	15.8	7.8	10.8	10.5
Stop watching even after a few episodes/minutes if I don't like it	59.8	52.7	56.2	47.4	54.0
Watch seasons and/or episodes repeatedly	52.9	34.9	45.2	35.3	42.2
Spoil the ending right away and then watching all the episodes	7.9	19.8	9.4	8.8	11.4
Watch more than one serial drama at the same time	47.4	31.5	31.4	24.5	33.4
Watch them while involved in other activities	60.5	40.3	33.3	29.4	40.3
Rewatch a specific episode from my favourite serial dramas	32.6	40.4	42.2	36.6	38.2

Table 10. Which genres of serial dramas do you usually watch? [Percentage of "Yes"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Action	66.3	69.2	78.2	83.0	74.5
Comedy	81.8	69.9	69.4	69.6	72.4
Crime	67.7	56.2	67.5	68.6	65.2
Drama	75.6	61.0	58.1	67.0	65.0
Fantasy	45.0	34.2	53.7	52.9	47.0
Horror	35.7	41.8	39.4	58.2	43.7
Animation	39.2	41.1	44.6	47.4	43.2
Historical	45.4	32.2	39.7	32.0	37.4
Musical	16.8	19.2	19.6	20.9	18.9
Western	12.7	15.8	7.7	13.1	12.1

Table 11. Do you usually watch teen dramas?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	15.8	26.0	14.6	10.1	16.5
Not very/not much	38.5	41.8	29.2	37.3	36.3
Quite a lot	31.6	22.6	35.3	36.3	31.7
A lot	14.1	6.2	20.7	16.3	14.7
No answer	0.0	3.4	0.2	0.0	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 12. Why do you watch NOT AT ALL or NOT VERY/MUCH teen dramas?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
I prefer using other media as source of entertainment	27.8	42.2	36.8	27.0	34.2
The issues portrayed are not relevant to my age	5.4	2.5	1.6	10.3	4.6
Teen dramas portray teenage life in unrealistic ways	17.4	19.1	18.4	23.0	19.4
I generally prefer genres other than teen dramas	46.6	24.0	38.4	31.6	34.4
No one in my group watches teen dramas	2.8	3.9	1.0	1.8	2.5
There no/very few teen dramas to watch	0.0	6.4	2.2	3.5	3.3
No answer	0.0	1.9	1.6	2.8	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 13. Why do you watch QUITE A LOT or A LOT teen dramas?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
They are an enjoyable source of entertainment	25.9	21.3	28.7	25.6	26.1
The issues portrayed are relevant to my age	29.4	29.3	27.5	23.1	27.0
I appreciate the realistic portrayals of teenage life	19.5	9.0	14.4	19.1	16.0
I am interested in the drama and romance genres	18.8	25.8	19.6	23.4	21.4
Many of my friends watch teen dramas	1.1	4.5	1.5	1.3	1.8
There lots of teen dramas to watch	5.3	4.5	7.4	6.9	6.3
They are an enjoyable source of entertainment	0.0	5.6	0.9	0.6	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 14. To what extent do you watch serial dramas from: [Percentage of "Quite a lot" + "A lot"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Your country	38.1	22.6	46.9	20.0	32.5
Other European countries	46.1	24.6	36.4	53.3	40.0
US	90.4	68.4	76.6	74.9	77.5
Latin American countries	6.5	17.1	15.4	28.8	17.0
Middle Eastern countries	3.1	6.9	8.8	11.5	7.7
Asian countries	15.8	19.2	14.4	19.6	17.1

Table 15. Do you usually watch serial dramas:	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
In original language, without subtitles	14.8	8.9	6.9	10.1	10.0
In original language, with subtitles in your local language	62.2	51.4	33.9	67.4	52.7
In original language, with subtitles in original language	20.3	8.9	11.3	16.3	14.1
Dubbed, with subtitles in the original language	0.3	4.8	5.2	1.0	3.0
Dubbed, without subtitles	2.1	19.9	42.1	4.2	18.4
No answer	0.3	6.1	0.6	1.0	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 16. Where do you find serial dramas to watch?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
I get recommendations from friends and relatives	37.9	40.4	26.9	27.7	32.7
I read reviews in newspapers or specialised magazines	3.2	4.8	3.4	6.7	4.5
I'm influenced by what I find on social networks	21.5	19.4	32.4	27.5	25.7
I follow fan groups of specific series, or genres	2.7	4.8	2.3	3.5	3.2
I rely on recommendations from streaming platforms	15.9	8.8	14.2	10.3	12.4
I seek out series based on books or films	8.0	8.3	12.3	9.0	9.6
I watch what is shown on broadcast/terrestrial TV	1.4	4.5	1.3	3.3	2.6
I'm inspired by ads (posters, online ads, tv ads)	9.3	8.0	7.1	11.9	9.0
No answer	0.1	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 17. To what extent do you attend streaming events while watching serial dramas? (Amazon Party)	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	88.7	58.2	76.3	65.4	72.3
Not very/not much	8.9	29.5	17.6	26.8	20.6
Quite a lot	1.7	4.1	4.1	6.9	4.2
A lot	0.7	3.4	1.7	0.3	1.5
No answer	0.0	4.8	0.3	0.6	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 18. To what extent are you interested in gender-related issues?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	34.4	41.2	12.4	26.2	27.6
Not very/not much	33.7	30.1	31.1	38.2	33.2
Quite a lot	19.2	19.2	39.9	25.2	26.7
A lot	12.0	6.8	16.3	10.1	11.5
No answer	0.7	2.7	0.3	0.3	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 19. To what extent do you believe that gender-related issues are important in today's society?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	21.0	22.6	5.0	13.7	14.9
Not very/not much	24.7	24.7	12.7	29.1	22.3
Quite a lot	33.7	31.5	43.5	40.5	37.7
A lot	19.6	18.5	37.5	14.7	23.3
No answer	1.0	2.7	1.3	2.0	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 20. Why do you think there is so much talk about gender-related issues?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Due to an increase in violence against women and/or sexual minorities	9.4	18.8	34.9	26.6	23.2
National and EU Institutions/Organizations have started to deal in depth with these issues	6.8	5.3	5.5	8.7	6.5
Our society is experiencing significant cultural changes (ex. activism, social movements, etc.)	23.3	20.0	18.0	17.9	19.7
Due to increased media coverage and social engagement	17.8	20.8	6.6	13.8	14.2
We talk a lot about these topics at school	4.8	6.7	3.2	3.1	4.3
Society has become too liberal regarding gender identities	18.7	12.4	12.7	14.3	14.5
Some cultures and age groups are too conservative in their views about gender identities	10.9	7.0	15.9	9.0	11.0
I don't agree, there isn't so a lot of talk about these topics	7.5	7.6	2.8	6.3	5.9
No answer	0.8	1.2	0.4	0.3	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 21. How do you rate your level of awareness of gender-related issues?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Very low	28.2	8.9	5.2	4.2	11.2
Low	22.0	14.4	12.7	11.1	14.9
Moderate	27.8	41.8	53.4	52.0	44.4
High	16.2	20.5	24.5	21.6	20.9
Very high	5.5	10.3	3.6	10.5	7.3
No answer	0.3	4.1	0.6	0.6	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 22. In your opinion, to what extent is "diversity" associated with: [Percentage of "Quite a lot" + "A lot"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Gender identities	53.6	51.3	62.3	46.1	53.7
Sexual orientation	56.4	58.9	64.8	54.3	58.9
Age groups	48.4	41.1	32.7	53.6	43.4
Class or economic status	54.0	44.6	53.4	44.4	49.3
Physical disabilities	47.8	52.1	59.0	39.2	49.9
Psychological disabilities	46.1	46.6	60.6	46.4	50.5
Race/ethnicities	62.9	61.6	55.1	47.7	56.6
Religious beliefs	51.9	49.3	35.5	40.2	43.7

Table 23. To what extent are gender-related issues being discussed at your school?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	12.4	11.0	14.9	32.0	17.6
Not very/not much	51.2	49.3	52.1	51.3	51.0
Quite a lot	27.5	29.5	29.2	14.1	25.2
A lot	6.9	4.8	3.3	2.0	4.2
No answer	2.0	5.4	0.5	0.6	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Table 24. At your school, to what extent do you discuss gender-related issues: [Percentage of "Yes"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Among friends and fellow students during breaks	46.4	34.9	54.5	72.5	52.5
As part of classroom teaching (it's a topic in school)	51.5	46.6	48.8	11.8	39.9
As part of student counselling and other activities	6.2	23.3	13.8	27.8	17.7
During private conversations with some teachers	5.2	12.3	14.9	20.3	13.3
During workshops or seminars focused on these issues	17.2	47.9	30.3	24.5	30.0
Within student-led initiatives (e.g. school assemblies, students' meetings, etc.)	13.4	26.0	44.4	23.9	27.9

Table 25. To what extent do you engage in the discussion about gender-related issues at school?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	31.3	31.5	12.4	31.4	25.9
Not very/not much	44.0	43.8	39.1	48.4	43.6
Quite a lot	19.2	18.5	39.1	17.0	24.3
A lot	4.8	2.1	8.6	2.6	4.7
No answer	0.7	4.1	0.8	0.6	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 26. If you are NOT AT ALL or NOT VERY/NOT MUCH engaged in the discussion about gender-related issues at school, why is that the case?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
They are not issues I would talk about at school	22.3	27.2	3.7	26.4	20.7
Teachers are not confident talking about these issues	3.6	8.8	10.5	10.2	8.2
I don't feel comfortable talking about these issues	8.1	8.8	17.9	11.4	11.3
I'm not interested in these issues	57.9	43.0	39.5	28.9	42.0
My school lacks spaces, activities and programmes dedicated to these issues	5.4	7.9	23.7	19.1	13.8
No answer	2.7	4.3	4.7	4.0	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 27. If you are QUITE A LOT or A LOT engaged in the discussion about gender-related issues at school, why is that the case?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
School is where our opinions are shaped and therefore we need to talk about these issues	13.8	27.8	74.4	51.5	50.5
Teachers encourage the discussion of these issues	4.2	5.6	5.1	6.5	5.2
I feel comfortable talking about these issues regardless of the school context	26.4	22.2	4.0	17.7	13.9
I'm very interested in these issues	47.2	22.2	11.4	11.3	20.2
In my school, there are already spaces, activities and programmes dedicated to these issues	4.2	5.6	0.6	6.5	3.1
No answer	4.2	16.6	4.5	6.5	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 28. In your opinion, serial dramas represent on screen:**  
*[Percentage of “Quite a lot” + “A lot”]*

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Gender identities	48.5	39.7	63.1	47.3	50.4
Sexual orientation	59.8	52.0	76.3	58.5	62.5
Age groups	51.6	52.7	52.1	57.9	53.5
Class or economic status	58.8	46.5	60.1	50.0	54.2
Physical disabilities	17.1	28.1	36.9	28.5	28.2
Psychological disabilities	36.7	33.5	41.6	35.0	37.0
Race/ethnicities	62.2	61.0	66.1	45.1	58.9
Religious beliefs	29.9	26.8	35.0	28.8	30.3

**Table 29. According to you, why do serial dramas address gender-related issues?**

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
To influence political agendas	6.9	11.7	2.1	6.6	6.5
To tackle gender discriminations and stereotypes	15.5	15.0	19.8	19.0	17.5
To raise awareness of acts of violence	2.6	11.3	18.6	13.2	12.0
To “normalise” people’s right to choose their own identities	20.7	16.8	18.6	20.4	19.1
To promote new cultural models	3.8	3.5	2.8	6.9	4.2
To create a more inclusive society	10.7	10.5	13.9	8.3	11.0
To foster the public debate on these topics	8.4	3.5	2.7	4.0	4.5
To reach an audience	8.8	11.4	4.9	7.2	7.9
To entertain the viewers	2.4	4.1	3.3	2.7	3.1
To establish politically correct representation	7.2	2.6	5.8	1.9	4.4
To pressure us in accepting different gender-related situations	9.4	7.0	6.8	0.0	8.0
No answer	3.6	2.6	0.7	0.8	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 30. Do gender-related stereotypes feature in serial dramas?**  
*[Percentage of “Quite a lot” + “A lot”]*

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Local serial dramas	36.1	24.0	50.4	19.6	33.1
US serial dramas	62.9	59.6	59.7	68.6	62.6
Not local or US serial dramas	40.9	37.0	47.6	56.2	45.6

**Table 31. Which patterns of gender-related stereotypes do you usually notice in the serial dramas you watch?**  
*[Percentage of “Quite a lot” + “A lot”]*

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Emotional woman vs. rational man	59.4	53.4	58.1	53.2	56.1
Aggressive man vs. submissive woman	52.3	51.4	68.6	53.5	57.1
Hero woman vs. villain man	27.9	34.9	36.9	50.3	37.7
Women at home vs. men at work	36.4	47.9	58.2	45.1	47.6
Sexualised representation of women	56.4	58.2	67.2	50.0	58.4
Sexualised representation of men	26.4	28.1	20.9	24.8	24.8
Distorted representation of sexual orientation	31.6	33.6	41.0	39.6	36.7
Gender imbalance at work	35.4	36.3	49.6	40.9	41.1
Transgender identities portrayed through specific physical or psychological traits	20.3	35.7	52.9	40.2	38.2
Poor representation of LGBTQ+ communities	29.5	34.9	31.4	33.1	32.2
Inauthentic representation diverse gender identities	26.8	35.0	43.6	34.6	35.4
Diversity represented as being illegal or immoral	12.7	21.2	24.6	26.5	21.5

**Table 32.** Do you think there is a fair balance in the portrayal of male and female characters in serial dramas?  
[Percentage of “Quite a lot” + “A lot”]

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Local serial dramas	51.6	37.0	53.7	35.0	44.7
US serial dramas	46.1	43.8	66.9	55.9	54.0
Not local or US serial dramas	41.6	37.0	52.4	51.7	46.1

**Table 33.** Do you think there is a fair balance in the portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters in serial dramas?  
[Percentage of “Quite a lot” + “A lot”]

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Local serial dramas	29.5	27.4	29.7	15.4	25.7
US serial dramas	43.3	43.1	62.0	55.5	51.6
Not local or US serial dramas	29.2	28.8	41.3	43.1	36.0

**Table 34.** In the serial dramas you have watched, is the main character (lead) associated with:  
[Percentage of “Quite a lot” + “A lot”]

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Gender fluidity	8.3	9.5	25.4	11.4	14.3
LGBTQ+	22.7	19.2	41.0	17.0	25.8
Gender transition	4.8	8.3	15.1	7.9	9.4
Class or economic status	55.0	37.0	61.5	36.9	48.2
Racial/ethnic diversity	6.2	38.3	53.2	31.7	33.6
Physical disability	24.8	12.4	18.2	12.7	17.0
Psychological disabilities	47.1	17.1	25.9	17.9	26.8

**Table 35.** How important is it for you to see characters of YOUR gender identity and/or sexual orientation portrayed in empowering roles in serial dramas?

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	32.7	25.3	20.4	17.6	23.7
Not very/not much	23.0	26.1	32.5	30.1	28.2
Quite a lot	20.3	19.9	31.7	31.0	26.1
A lot	10.3	12.3	12.1	16.7	12.9
No answer	13.7	16.4	3.3	4.6	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 36.** How important is it for you to see characters of DIFFERENT gender identities and/or romantic orientation portrayed in empowering roles in serial dramas?

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	33.3	24.7	21.5	29.1	26.8
Not very/not much	25.1	26.7	32.0	39.2	30.9
Quite a lot	16.2	22.6	34.7	21.9	24.5
A lot	11.0	9.6	8.5	4.9	8.5
No answer	14.4	16.4	3.3	4.9	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 37.** Over the last few years, have you noticed a change in the representation of diversity in serial dramas?  
[Percentage of “Quite a lot” + “A lot”]

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Local serial dramas	41.2	40.5	50.7	25.8	40.0
US serial dramas	60.8	54.1	65.5	65.4	61.8
Not local or US serial dramas	45.7	44.5	47.7	52.0	47.5

**Table 38.** To what extent do current serial dramas effectively represent your generation's views in respect of gender-related issues?

[Percentage of "Quite a lot" + "A lot"]

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Local serial dramas	35.4	26.0	38.0	23.9	31.1
US serial dramas	41.6	43.2	63.6	54.9	51.6
Not local or US serial dramas	31.3	28.2	45.5	49.7	39.2

**Table 39.** If you answered NOT AT ALL or NOT VERY/NOT MUCH about LOCAL SERIAL DRAMAS, why is that the case?

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
They refer to a model of society which doesn't belong to my generation	12.9	17.7	15.0	23.1	17.6
They talk about gender and diversity as a "problem" rather than a "value"	12.6	17.1	18.3	19.2	17.2
The representations they provide are always too tragic	6.3	8.9	14.6	12.7	11.1
It is only a form of "gender washing"	15.9	12.7	7.0	13.6	12.0
They don't reflect changing attitudes toward gender identities	11.9	12.0	12.9	15.2	13.2
The representation of gender-related issues appears too stereotypical	15.2	10.1	26.5	10.9	16.1
No answer	25.2	21.5	5.7	5.3	12.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 40.** If you answered QUITE A LOT or A LOT about LOCAL SERIAL DRAMAS, why is that the case?

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
The evolution of characters is similar to the self-discovery experienced by my generation	12.4	15.0	21.7	16.7	16.7
There is an authentic representation of LGBTQ+ characters and their experiences	8.7	7.0	10.9	16.7	10.5
The representations they provide are very positive	12.9	5.0	7.2	12.1	9.2
Serial dramas represent a diversity of opinions, beliefs, and lifestyles typical of my generation	22.0	15.0	20.7	16.1	18.9
They deal with issues of interest to us (e.g. mental health, immigration, body positivity, etc.)	7.5	13.0	15.2	14.4	12.5
They reflect changing attitudes toward gender identities	6.2	9.0	12.0	9.2	9.2
No answer	30.3	36.0	12.3	14.8	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 41.** In general, do you believe that gender representations in serial dramas have a positive impact on people's attitudes and understanding of gender roles in society?

	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	17.9	21.2	7.4	9.2	13.5
Not very/not much	26.1	29.5	36.6	31.7	31.3
Quite a lot	39.9	32.2	47.7	44.4	41.5
A lot	5.5	4.1	5.8	13.1	7.1
No answer	10.6	13.0	2.5	1.6	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 42. If you answered NOT AT ALL or NOT VERY/NOT MUCH, for which reasons?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
They spread gender stereotypes	16.4	16.7	15.4	12.6	15.4
They reinforce outdated models of gender roles	8.8	18.5	6.6	13.0	11.8
They don't raise our awareness in respect of these topics	16.4	10.5	17.0	19.8	15.6
They aren't a source of inspiration for everyday life	12.6	18.5	16.0	23.5	17.6
They negatively affect the self-esteem of who could be labelled as "diverse"	7.6	10.5	12.6	13.4	11.0
They have a limited influence in shaping cultural attitudes toward gender issues	16.8	10.5	26.1	12.6	16.7
No answer	21.4	14.8	6.3	5.1	11.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 43. If you answered QUITE A LOT or A LOT, for which reasons?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
They show how to tackle gender stereotypes	11.0	19.5	13.6	15.0	14.5
They enable us to rethink our views about gender roles	22.6	21.1	22.0	23.0	22.3
They raise our awareness in respect of these topics	18.0	24.5	35.3	24.6	26.4
They are a source of inspiration for everyday life	4.6	2.4	5.6	10.5	6.1
They boost the self-esteem of who could be labelled as "diverse"	19.8	6.5	14.3	15.9	14.5
They shape people's attitudes toward gender issues	8.8	8.9	4.9	8.5	7.5
No answer	15.2	17.1	4.3	2.5	8.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 44. To what extent do you think serial dramas have a responsibility to address and challenge gender norms?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	19.9	21.2	8.3	17.3	16.2
Not very/not much	24.4	24.7	28.7	43.8	30.4
Quite a lot	33.3	29.5	49.9	30.1	36.4
A lot	8.9	5.5	10.2	5.6	7.7
No answer	13.4	19.2	3.0	3.3	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 45. To what extent do serial dramas influence YOUR OWN attitudes and behaviours?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	23.7	24.7	24.2	23.5	24.0
Not very/not much	40.2	34.9	43.8	42.8	40.7
Quite a lot	22.3	21.2	24.5	25.5	23.5
A lot	1.0	2.7	4.4	4.9	3.4
No answer	12.7	16.4	3.0	3.3	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 46. In respect of gender-related issues, the serial dramas you've watched have influenced your: [Percentage of "Quite a lot" + "A lot"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Opinions	15.4	23.3	33.0	34.6	27.1
Emotions	33.0	31.5	51.8	41.8	40.3
Behaviours	16.1	22.6	28.9	27.1	24.2
Ethics	16.2	19.9	31.4	29.2	24.6
Relations	11.0	22	22.9	23.2	20.0
Self-esteem	15.5	17.2	33.0	34.6	25.6

Table 47. Have you ever recommended serial dramas because of their positive portrayal of gender-related issues?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Yes	24.7	26.0	37.2	46.4	33.9
No	60.5	56.2	59.5	52.0	57.2
No answer	14.8	17.8	3.3	1.6	8.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 48. Have you ever been inspired by a character's journey in terms of gender representation?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Yes	20.3	29.5	19.3	35.0	25.7
No	65.6	54.8	75.2	63.7	65.2
No answer	14.1	15.8	5.5	2.3	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 49. Do you think that cosplaying (character costumed role-playing) can contribute to promoting positive awareness and attitudes about gender-related issues?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Yes, it helps breaking traditional gender norms	8.6	13.0	10.2	11.1	10.7
Yes, it gives greater visibility and acceptance to LGBTQ+ community	4.5	6.2	11.6	13.1	9.0
I don't know	43.0	37.0	51.2	46.4	44.8
No, it only ends up reinforcing gender stereotypes	14.4	9.6	8.3	12.4	11.0
No, it's just a business ploy	13.7	15.1	15.2	13.7	14.5
No answer	15.8	19.1	3.5	3.3	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 50. Do you discuss how serial dramas deal with gender-related issues with your: [Percentage of "Quite a lot" + "A lot"]	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Parents/Guardian	17.8	6.2	19.8	20.2	16.3
Siblings	10.7	11.7	27.8	20.6	18.3
Classmates	25.4	13.7	36.9	33.6	28.1
Friends (other than classmates)	27.5	21.3	45.8	43.8	35.3
Teachers	7.2	6.2	16.0	8.2	9.8
Fan communities	7.6	11.7	12.2	14.4	11.5
Relations or groups through online social network	8.3	11.0	14.4	10.9	12.8

Table 51. To what extent do you think that fan communities are effective spaces for discussing and exploring gender-related issues?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	19.6	19.2	18.2	28.1	21.2
Not very/not much	27.5	34.9	37.2	39.2	34.9
Quite a lot	29.9	21.9	35.0	23.9	28.8
A lot	4.1	4.1	2.5	2.9	3.4
No answer	18.9	19.9	7.1	5.9	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 52. If you answered QUITE A LOT or A LOT, for which reasons?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
They are “safe” spaces where you can express your views without judgment	37.1	27.9	28.2	39.2	32.7
They encourage creativity to re-interpret gender roles	6.5	10.6	10.0	15.6	10.3
They promote fan-based activism	8.1	18.3	12.0	15.1	13.0
They contribute to a rich dialogue on these issues	14.9	6.7	29.2	16.1	17.8
They allow you to get in touch with different cultures	9.3	7.7	9.3	6.5	8.4
No answer	24.1	28.8	11.3	7.5	17.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 53. Have you ever changed your views on gender and diversity due to serial dramas' storytelling?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	49.8	39.7	40.8	38.9	42.2
Not very/not much	23.4	26.7	30.3	27.8	27.2
Quite a lot	5.8	11.6	19.6	21.9	15.1
A lot	1.8	2.1	3.9	4.2	3.0
No answer	19.2	19.9	5.4	7.2	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 54. Have you ever changed your views on gender and diversity due to discussion about serial dramas with parents, friends or teachers?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	44.3	39.7	37.2	40.2	40.2
Not very/not much	21.0	27.4	32.2	29.8	27.9
Quite a lot	13.4	9.6	24.0	17.3	16.4
A lot	2.1	2.1	1.4	4.9	2.6
No answer	19.2	21.2	5.2	7.8	12.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 55. Have you ever changed your views on gender and diversity due to online discussion about serial dramas?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Not at all	57.8	41.1	52.9	46.7	49.8
Not very/not much	16.8	28.1	25.6	23.2	23.6
Quite a lot	4.8	8.2	13.8	13.7	10.4
A lot	1.0	2.7	1.6	6.5	3.0
No answer	19.6	19.9	6.1	9.9	13.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 56. While watching serial dramas, did you come across new insights into gender issues that you didn't know before?	DEN	IR	IT	RO	ALL
Yes	33.7	28.8	44.6	48.4	39.3
No	48.8	52.7	49.6	46.1	49.3
No answer	17.5	18.5	5.8	5.5	11.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>