

**BC** AGENCY

# **SCALE CREATIVITY** *NOT STEREOTYPES*

A European programme  
to make GenAI-driven  
advertising more  
inclusive.

# HELPING EUROPEAN SMEs TO OUTSMART ALGORITHMIC BIAS

Generative AI (GenAI) has moved past experimentation to become the primary infrastructure for modern brand communication. While this shift brings greater performance speed, democratised means of creative production, and many efficiencies for small and medium enterprises, the technology has been proven to present regressive gender bias as a default setting (UNESCO & International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence [IRCAI], 2024). While 86% of SMEs attribute revenue growth to digital advertising, they lack the in-house expertise to identify or correct these “built-in” stereotypes.

BC Agency proposes an integrated European programme designed to shine a light on these systemic biases and provide the practical, “low-friction” tools SMEs need to address them. We understand change won’t come about from a one-off technical “fix”; instead, we believe in building a transnational infrastructure that turns risk-awareness into a professional habit.

By blending data science with creative excellence, we aim to raise advertising standards across the EU through a clear 24-month roadmap: *Notice, Recognise, Act, Repeat, and Share*. Our goal is to foster a community of SMEs that are not only skilled in AI adoption but are recognised via a formal pledge and badge, turning responsible AI use into a tangible brand advantage.

We are a Lisbon-based creative communications agency, with roots in data science, with a majority-female team. We love this technology but we refuse to let it undo decades of progress in gender equality.

We are seeking partners who share this urgency to lead a consortium and help us set a new, inclusive standard for the European market.

If GenAI is already producing tomorrow's advertising, who is building the safeguards that stop it from repeating the stereotypes of yesterday?

This proposal addresses a critical capability gap in the current European market. For SMEs, digital advertising is essential for staying competitive, but bias is already visible in the GenAI systems shaping language and imagery. We aren't just identifying a cultural problem or offering a one-off technical fix. Instead, we are proposing a European programme that delivers a practical, transnational infrastructure for the responsible use of Generative AI across the SME ecosystem.

We are seeking partners to help define how AI-assisted creativity will be practised across Europe. We are building a model to ensure it is more inclusive, more credible and more transferable across languages, sectors and institutional settings. The goal is to create a timely framework to turn accelerated creativity into better advertising practice before default settings harden into regressive stereotypes.

## A CRITICAL CAPABILITY GAP IN GENAI

The adoption of Generative AI has moved past the stage of experimentation. More businesses than ever are using AI tools to generate advertising content at scale. In 2025, 19.95% of EU enterprises with more than 10 employees already used at least one AI technology, with adoption rates rising to 17% among small enterprises, 30.36% for medium-sized enterprises and 55.03% among large enterprises (Eurostat, 2025a).

GenAI is no longer adjacent to brand communication; it is becoming the primary infrastructure for producing it. Nearly 34.70% of EU enterprises now apply AI to marketing or sales and 8.76% were using technologies that generate written or spoken language or code (Eurostat, 2025a). At the same time, the advertising industry is rapidly normalising GenAI as part of creative workflows: in 2025, half of advertisers used GenAI

to build video ads and 86% are using or planning to use it for video advertising creative (Interactive Advertising Bureau [IAB], 2025).

This shift matters because it occurs where public visibility, credibility and commercial growth intersect. Nearly a third of EU enterprises use paid internet advertising (Eurostat, 2025b) and 86% of SMEs across 13 European countries attribute revenue growth directly to personalised digital advertising (Centre for Information Policy Leadership [CIPL], 2025).

The issue is no longer whether AI will influence the messages SMEs place into the market; it already does. However, we have outsourced creative agency to algorithmic systems where historically regressive gender bias is the default setting.

**17%**

AI Adoption  
among small  
enterprises

**30%**

AI Adoption  
among medium  
enterprises

**34%**

EU Enterprises  
applying AI to  
Marketing & Sales

**86%**

EU Enterprises  
attribute growth to  
digital advertising

## CERV: A MANDATE FOR ACTION

The urgency of this reality is reflected in Priority 4 of the CERV-2026-GE call, where the European Commission is supporting activities that combat gender stereotypes in media and advertising. By prioritising capacity building, training, guidance, awareness-raising and gender-sensitive awards or labels (European Commission, 2026) and making it clear that projects focused only on research will not be financed, the implication is straightforward: the European market requires a high-impact intervention that can respond to a transformation that is already underway.

The focus on SMEs is central to this proposal because of their high structural vulnerability. SMEs account for 99.8% of all enterprises in the EU (European Commission, 2025), yet they remain far less equipped than larger firms to responsibly adapt to new technologies. According to Eurostat (2025a), the primary barrier to adopting AI was the lack of relevant expertise. This was reported by 70.89% of respondents, meaning that while SMEs are most likely to adopt accessible generative tools due to the immediate efficiency gains, they are more exposed to bias and reputational risk because they do not have dedicated safeguards, in-house reviewers or specialised technical teams.

That is where the opportunity lies. To match the rapid adoption of GenAI as part of their creative process, European SMEs need an accessible infrastructure of tools and standards that ensures this creativity is inclusive by design.



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*\*European Commission, 2025*

## **GENDER ANALYSIS: MAPPING RISK IN GENAI ADOPTION**

The challenge is not to persuade SMEs to avoid using GenAI. The challenge is to close the distance between using GenAI and using it without reproducing and reinforcing regressive gender stereotypes and cultural bias. This bias is not incidental; it is built into the default behaviour of widely used large language models.

The current GenAI landscape presents four critical risks that, if left unaddressed, threaten to reverse decades of progress in European gender equality:

**REPRESENTATIONAL BIAS** Studies report that LLMs are significantly more likely to associate gendered names with traditional roles, for example, female names with “home,” “family” and “children,” while male names are linked to “business,” “executive” and “career”. They also describe women as working in domestic roles up to four times more often than men (UNESCO & International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence [IRCAI], 2024).

**PRESENTATIONAL BIAS** In image generation, audits of diffusion models confirm that prompts associated with positions of authority consistently over-represent white and male-coded outputs, reinforcing culturally dominant archetypes rather than diverse social realities (Luccioni et al., 2023). This erodes the visibility of female expertise and leadership in the media.

**NORMATIVE BIAS** While SMEs are using supposedly “neutral” prompts to generate campaign assets quickly, flawed algorithms may lead to unintentionally counteracting decades of progress in dismantling social stereotypes. This bias puts the brand’s commercial reputation at risk, compromising their ideas of social normality and distorting representations of expertise and leadership.

**LINGUISTIC BIAS** The problem becomes even more pronounced in a multilingual European environment. Research on French-language prompting found that 73.1% of LLM responses involving human nouns defaulted to a masculine-generic form, reinforcing male-centric representations (Doyen & Todirascu, 2025) and leading to the use of exclusionary language or imagery that alienates key audiences.

Bias varies across the very language environments in which European SMEs operate, making a one-size-fits-all approach insufficient. Furthermore, the MAGBIG benchmark for gender biases reveals that multilingual text-to-image systems do not behave consistently across languages. Prompt-engineering strategies are ineffective at resolving biases reliably and can even be detrimental to image quality (Friedrich et al., 2025).

Within performance-led digital advertising, these effects can quickly become self-reinforcing. As GenAI outputs are the fastest to produce and easiest to scale, they are often mistaken for a safe and reliable solution.

This is the capability gap this project aims to address. While the market is already actively embracing new tools, it still lacks the infrastructure for their responsible adoption.

## **OUR SOLUTION: SCALING CREATIVITY, NOT STEREOTYPES**

Complex problems do not respond to isolated interventions. They respond to systems of action that reinforce one another over time. What we propose is not a stand-alone campaign, a stand-alone tool or a stand-alone training session, but an integrated programme designed for the way SMEs actually adopt GenAI: quickly, under resource constraints and with a strong focus on outputs that are measurable, repeatable and commercially useful.

The programme follows a clear path from initial risk-awareness to verified implementation, ensuring that the right support is available at the right moment.

### **PROGRAMME OVERVIEW**

The following provides a pragmatic summary of the programme's scope, delivery schedule and responsible parties:

#### **PHASE 1**

*Notice (Months 1–4)*

Umbrella awareness campaign with multilingual messaging, micro-lessons and creator partnerships.

Lead: BC Agency.

Deliverables: Campaign assets, reach metrics, multilingual content library.

## **PHASE 2**

*Recognise (Months 3–8)*

Partner-hosted resource hub, self-diagnosis quiz, red-teaming benchmarks, standards alignment pack.

Lead: TBC.

Deliverables: Resource hub, benchmark dataset, SME self-assessment tool.

## **PHASE 3**

*Act (Months 6–14)*

Stereotype-safe prompting playbook, multilingual prompt guidance, template library, pre-publication checklist, content-check tool.

Lead: [Technical Partner TBC].

Deliverables: Playbook, checklist, browser plugin prototype.

## **PHASE 4**

*Repeat (Months 10–20)*

Modular training curriculum, train-the-trainer kit, challenge-based testing events, workflow integration.

Lead: TBC.

Deliverables: Training modules, trainer certification, event reports.

## **PHASE 5**

*Share (Months 16–24)*

SME pledge/voluntary code of conduct, recognition badge, annual awards showcase, monitoring and evaluation toolkit.

Lead: TBC.

Deliverables: Pledge framework, badge criteria, awards showcase, final evaluation report.

Total project duration: 24 months.

Activities are sequenced to overlap where dependencies allow, ensuring continuous momentum throughout the programme.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

METRIC	PHASE	TARGET (MONTH 12)	TARGET (MONTH 24)
Market Awareness	Reach & Notice	250,000+ SMEs reached	750,000+ total reach
Direct Engagement	Recognise	5,000 self-diagnosis quizzes	15,000+ diagnostics completed
Technical Adoption	Act	1,500 active tool users	5,000+ browser plugin installs
Capacity Building	Repeat	200 certified trainers	500+ across 5+ EU countries
Social Proof	Share	10k community followers	25k+ followers/250 pledges

## TIMELINE

METRIC	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
P1: Notice	X	X						
Campaign launch (M3)		!						
P2: Recognise		X	X					
Resource Hub Live (M6)			!					
P3: Act			X	X	X			
Self-Check Tool Launch (M9)				!				
P4: Repeat				X	X	X	X	
Train-the-Trainer					!			
P5: Share						X	X	X
SME Pledge & Awards (M20)							!	

X: Active Implementation Period  
!: Major Project Milestone/Launch

# BUDGET OUTLINE

In accordance with the CERV-2026-GE call requirements (Section 6), the requested EU grant falls within the eligible range of EUR 100,000 to EUR 500,000. The grant will be awarded as a lump sum contribution at a funding rate of 90% of the estimated project budget.

The budget is structured across the consortium partners as follows. Final figures will be confirmed once all partners are agreed:

## **WORK PACKAGE 1**

Project Management and Coordination (max. 10% of total): Consortium coordination, reporting, financial management and quality assurance.

## **WORK PACKAGE 2**

Awareness and Outreach (Phases 1 and 5): Campaign development and deployment, multilingual content production, awards showcase, dissemination.

## **WORK PACKAGE 3**

Diagnosis and Benchmarking (Phase 2): Resource hub development, red-teaming benchmarks, self-assessment tools, standards alignment.

## **WORK PACKAGE 4**

Tools and Implementation (Phase 3): Prompting playbook, template library, checklists, content-check tool development.

## **WORK PACKAGE 5**

Training and Sustainability (Phase 4): Curriculum development, train-the-trainer programme, testing events, workflow integration.

[NOTE: The detailed budget table will be prepared using the EU Portal template and submitted as a mandatory annex.]

# WHY US?

BC Agency is a Lisbon-based communications agency uniquely positioned to address the intersection of AI, gender equality, and SME growth. We don't just critique the problem; we live at the heart of the solution.

## **A TECHNICAL & CREATIVE HYBRID**

Co-founded by a Data Scientist and a Creative Director, we treat AI as a partner, not just a tool. We understand the algorithmic defaults of LLMs and diffusion models that lead to representational and linguistic bias.

## **A PERSONAL MANDATE FOR EQUALITY**

As a 50% female-owned agency with a team that is over 57% women, the fight against gender stereotypes in advertising is central to our DNA. We are the target demographic we seek to protect and the experts required to lead the change.

## **PROVEN SME ADVOCACY**

In our four-year history, we have empowered numerous SMEs to adopt new technologies. We understand their structural vulnerabilities—specifically the lack of “safeguard” infrastructure—and we design “low-friction” tools that fit into their high-pressure workflows.

## **PROPRIETARY INNOVATION**

We bring unique technical assets to this project, including:

### **THE BIAS SCRAPER**

Proprietary technology to identify and score AI-generated ads across Europe for gender bias.

### **THE AI SELF-CHECK TOOL**

We plan on building a user-facing platform that rates gender bias on creative assets in real-time and provides actionable guidance for improvement.

### **INFLUENCER INTELLIGENCE**

Advanced tools to identify and partner with relevant micro-influencers across key European markets to ensure the message resonates locally.

## **OUR VISION: LEADING BY EXAMPLE**

We plan to implement AI throughout every phase of this campaign to demonstrate how to harness its power without sacrificing social progress.

We are looking for a lead partner to help us turn this vision into the new European standard for responsible advertising.

## **OUR TEAM:**

Should you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss our proposal, please feel free to contact us.

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