



“There is a disconnection between the talent-based cultural and creative world, its policies, and the debate around social and labour impacts that the digital transformation has on the creative economy.”
-Margherita LICATA

Image Source: Extract from the original score of 'The Contour of the Stars', an immersive digital and music piece. Module 5 'The Spark' - Where does an idea come from, does the idea grow from the initial spark as it is interrogated and challenged by the core group? What is the drama of the excitement of the spark? Image by courtesy of the composer Emmanuel Witzthum, 2022. All rights reserved ©.



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How creative jobs can also be quality jobs: the quest for social justice in the digital tomorrow ¹

Youtubers, musicians, sound engineers, fashion designers, broadcasters, architects - creative jobs are not one linear and uniform ecosystem, but a constellation of unique occupations and working realities. Digital applications have added complexity to the creative ecosystem, and the jobs within it. Such complexity requires approaches that acknowledge a multiplicity of realities - encompassing small and big actors or enterprises, different and new contractual arrangements, the degree of and access to technologies - and give a voice to the specific needs within such realities.

As consumers, we use creative content, we listen to streamed songs, we watch movies on demand, we wear fashionable clothes and we read e-books.

However, when discussing cultural and creative policies in the context of technological transformations, we often do

not consider the significant social and labour impacts these transformations may have on the creative actors : on the working conditions of the content creators; on the creative enterprises dealing with viability issues in the digital environment and sometimes struggling to ensure access to digital skills for their workforce; as well as on the level of remuneration of the “creatives” in the new digital environment.

The harnessing of the fullest potential of technological progress in the creative economy needs to go hand in hand with policies ensuring dignity, self-fulfilment and a just sharing of the benefits for all within the creative economy.

For the digital tomorrow to be one where benefits are equally shared, employment creation strategies need to complement policy reforms ensuring quality of creative jobs, respects of labour rights; as well as ensure a just transition and a human-centred approach to digital transformation.²

The presence of insecure forms of employment in the digital ecosystem means its actors, creative workers and enterprises, operate within grey areas of application of labour laws, of lack of clarity around the application of competition laws, paucity of policy guidance on fair remuneration, and lack of recognition of their professional status.

In some regions, creative jobs are synonymous of informal employment. However, addressing informality is a long-term effort that requires addressing its root causes. The transi-

tion of the creative economy to formalization may require a combination of incentives, including access to social security, access to financial services and digital infrastructure, as well as stronger compliance mechanisms.³

Gaps remain in the quality and adequacy of business services provided to enterprises and especially to MSMEs, in terms of access to technology transfer and adequate investment in capital-intensive technologies; access to appropriate skills; investments in people and infrastructures, through tax incentives and transparent administrative procedures.

An new action framework for the creative economy is needed – a set of key principles defining the relationship between government and citizens, workers and businesses and different groups of the population – to agree on key commitments that would help shaping the future creative ecosystem around equality, social justice and equal sharing of the benefits brought about the digital transformation. It would revolve around the following core aspirations:

- Fair remuneration in the context of the emerging business models and digital platforms
- Enabling environment for the creative enterprises to be sustainable, resilient and inclusive
- Expanding coverage of adequate and sustainable social protection within the creative economy

- Investing in people capabilities (up- skilling, re-skilling, life-long learning) to support them throughout the transition
- Professionalization of creative occupations; Anchoring the creative economy to a strong and effective labour protection framework covering all typologies of workers

What are the enablers of this framework?

1. Policies which build bridges between creative/digital agendas and the employment and social agendas, promoting labour and social protection, access to skills and education, fair remuneration, incentives to creative business and enterprises.
2. Partnerships around knowledge transfer between regions and within regions; integration of digital skills into educational systems; investing in career development through technical and vocational skills, and entrepreneurship, tailored to the different sectors of the creative economy.
3. Innovative approaches to social protection that adapt eligibility criteria and qualifying conditions to sectoral or occupational income patterns; devise new flexible systems and diversify financing sources, through e.g., contributions from cultural and art users.⁴

This aspirational agenda can only be realized through “dialogues” at different levels between a variety of actors – from digital platforms to industry bodies, trade unions, artists’ and cultural professionals’ communities, as well as different government institutions – to help reconcile the social, economic and technological dimensions, ensuring they are at the service of each other; and integrate sectoral policies within the creative economy into broader policies (debt, fiscal, education and environmental policies).

References

1. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Labour Organization.
2. ILO, Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019.
3. ILO, Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204).
4. ILO, “Social Protection in the Cultural and Creative Sector - Country Practices and Innovations”, Working Paper 28, 2021.