

PRESS RELEASE

New ILO report examines Future of Work and Quality in the Media, Culture and Graphical Sector

GENEVA (ILO News): New media, multimedia and information and communication technologies may increase the demand for journalists, editors, artistes and others in the media, graphical and culture sectors, but compromise the quality of their work and of their working conditions, according to a new International Labour Office (ILO) report.

The report, entitled “The Future of Work and Quality in the Information Society: The Media, Culture, Graphical Sector”^{1/}, notes that computerization is tending to create jobs in the sector rather than killing them, although some segments are experiencing serious declines in employment.

Conversely, the report also observes that the explosion of new and multi-media is prompting growing concerns over the level of quality of working conditions and of output in the media, cultural and graphical sectors, and presents new challenges in terms of training for jobs in the media and entertainment industry.

Government, employer and worker representatives from around 50 countries will discuss at the ILO meeting in Geneva (18-22 October) the trends affecting several occupational groups in these industries, which are at the forefront of the changes caused by the growing importance of information and communication technologies (ICT).

“The economic structure of the media, culture, graphical sector has been transformed and there is a considerable convergence and overlapping with other sectors involved in the ICT industries,” said John Myers, author of the report from the Sectoral Activities Department of the ILO.

The meeting is also expected to examine how the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process has reflected on issues relating to work and quality in the sector, as well as possible relevant topics for the second phase of the WSIS (Tunis, October 2005).

At WSIS, the ILO argued that developing countries must identify policies and programmes to allow workers and employers, especially women and the young, to fully exploit the potential of ICTs, to minimize the pain of adjustment and to permit all economic sectors to benefit from the gains accrued from using the technologies. The ILO also stressed the importance of ensuring respect for international labour standards in the process.

The report notes many positive developments in recent years in this sector, for example in the growth of local content on the Internet in developing countries, of satellite and cable channels in the Arab world, and of radio and other media in Africa. Among those professionals whose jobs have been affected by the impact of ICTs “the demand for journalists remains high and will continue to do so,” says the report.

In the US, for example, research quoted by the report predicts a 16 per cent increase in jobs for writers and editors between 2002 and 2012, a 6.2 per cent increase for news analysts, reporters and correspondents, a 13.6 per cent increase for photographers, a 26.4 per cent increase for film and video editors, and a 21.9 per cent increase for graphic designers.

“For some occupational groups, particularly those engaged in providing creative content, the multimedia revolution promises tremendous growth in opportunities for work as distribution channels multiply,” adds the ILO report.

Employment in the production of films and audiovisual products in 2003 in Europe stood at over 1 million jobs, compared to around 850,000 in 1995. The American motion picture industry employed around 600,000 workers in 2002, compared with 221,000 in 1985. Some of that growth can be attributed to technology-related work in fields such as computer-generated digital production, visual special effects technologies, and systems and network management, says the report.

But according to the ILO there are several questions related to the quality of work, access to job opportunities and specific issues like copyright protection for the material that writers and performers produce.

“The impact of ICTs on the sector in terms of ‘quality’ can pose the question of whether certain primary standards of the ILO are being met in the domains of fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue,” explained Myers. “Questions of quality, whether of the product, the content or of the profession, already permeate debate in this field,” he added.

In the case of performers, for example, where the report sees “enormous opportunities” because there is more work, “employment created as a result of globalization and new technologies in the sector is often unstable and of low quality”.

The impact of ICTs on journalists’ safety and health is also cited, since there are greater time constraints and pressures to produce up-to-date information. “This has meant new work patterns for workers who even earlier did not have regular hours, eight-hour days, or set meal breaks, and are often employed on short-term, intermittent and precarious contracts.”

There is also the case of front-line journalists who face being shot at, beaten, imprisoned and even killed. “More than 1,000 journalists and media staff have been killed on duty over the past ten years,” recalls the ILO report, citing data from the International Federation of Journalists.

Training is also a challenge for workers in the media, culture and graphical sector. “Quality in work, employment, working life, products and content is likely to be promoted by access to training that can help improve productivity, adaptability and employability,” says the report.

It also stresses that “many of the new opportunities will arise for geographically mobile, well-educated, multiskilled and adaptable people, but more and more jobs are likely to be unstable, temporary assignments without fringe benefits or social security coverage, and some job losses or downgrading are inevitable”.

^{1/} *The Future of Work and Quality in the Information Society: The Media, Culture, Graphical Sector*. Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting on the Future of Work and Quality in the Information Society: The Media, Culture, Graphical Sector, Geneva, 2004. Price: 15 Swiss francs. ISBN 92-2-115554-4. For more information and for a digital copy of the report please visit: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/tmmcgs04/index.htm>