



Artificial intelligence (AI)

UK unions call for action to protect creative industry workers as AI develops

TUC says proposals on copyright and AI framework must go further to stop exploitation by 'rapacious tech bosses'

PA Media

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Action is needed to protect workers in creative industries [amid huge changes in technology and artificial intelligence](#), unions have urged.

The [TUC](#) said there was an urgent need to put in place “proper guardrails” for workers ranging from artists, writers and journalists to teachers and academics.

The union organisation said [government proposals for copyright and an AI framework](#), which are under consultation, needed to go further to protect creative workers.

The TUC called for transparency of AI training data to ensure workers know whether their data or image are being used, an opt-in system to protect creative work from commercial data mining unless workers give their permission and consent, and for measures to ensure creative workers are paid fairly for their work when their creative work is used to train AI models.

The report also called for an independent regulator to oversee the integration of AI into society and work.

The transformative potential of AI was huge, but without adequate regulation, “rapacious tech bosses” would be able to exploit creative workers and cash in on their work, the TUC warned.

Its general secretary, Paul Nowak, said: “AI has huge transformative potential - and if regulated properly, workers could benefit from the productivity gains created by this technology.

“UK law is simply failing to keep pace with the rapid speed of technological change and proliferation of AI at work.

“Writers, actors, performers, teachers, journalists and other creatives must have a say over how their work and image is used, and they must be paid fairly.

“A new taskforce should be established, bringing together creative workers, unions, technologists and government to manage the risks and maximise the opportunities of AI.

“The government should change direction on current proposals and go further to protect creative workers and safeguard the future of the creative industries. The sector is a jewel in the crown of our economy and vital for growth.

“The clock is ticking. Without proper guardrails put in place, rapacious tech bosses will continue to cash in on creatives’ work without their consent.”

Paul Fleming, the Equity union’s general secretary, said: “The industrial-scale theft of performers’ and artists’ work by big tech must stop.

“Equity’s groundbreaking TV and film negotiations show that empowering workers can help deal with the challenges of AI.

“The government’s proposals undermine an entire industry - bosses and workers alike - and threaten the efficacy of bargained solutions through unquestioning support of big tech.

“The government should embrace this AI manifesto in place of their misguided proposals and recognise that it is people who make our creative industries successful.”

Emma Reeves, the chair of the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain, said: “Writers’ work is already being stolen on an industrial scale to train AI systems, without permission or payment - infringing 300-year-old copyright protections.

“Without stronger protections for writers, big tech could be allowed to take what they like, when they like, without any requirement to share the profits with writers or other creators.

“This will not only harm creators themselves, but will likely deal a serious blow to the emerging AI market and harm the creative industries too. Alternatively, the voluntary licensing of work for AI training offers a potential for growth.”

Peter Kyle, the secretary of state for science, innovation, and technology, said:
“Securing Britain’s future as an AI leader and safeguarding the rights and rewards of people at work must go hand in hand as we navigate the complex and challenging technological revolution facing us all.

“Our consultation into AI and copyright closed this week and we are now considering the full range of the thousands of responses we have received.

“Let me be absolutely clear - no changes will be considered unless I am completely satisfied that we are delivering a solution which works for creators. That is my firm red line.”
