

Piracy costs 20,000 Italian jobs a year

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The research firm Tera Consultancy released a study earlier this year showing the impact of digital piracy in jobs in Europe.

The results showed that the film, music, software and television industries lose more than €10 billion across Europe annually, causing around 185,000 jobs losses. In Italy, the creative industries have lost €1.4 billion leading to the loss of 22,400 jobs a year.

According to the study, the creative industries contribute 6.9 per cent of the EU's gross domestic product (GDP), the equivalent of or about €860 billion. The sector accounts for 6.5 per cent of employment in the EU, or approximately 14 million jobs.

Unless governments change their policies significantly, losses to piracy in Europe will continue to grow. The annual net loss of jobs by 2015 could be around 610,000, compared to around 185,000 in 2008.

Under another scenario, in which both streaming piracy and online P2P grow in line with the expected 24 per cent increase in consumer traffic on internet networks, projected industry losses would amount to €56 billion in 2015, compared to €10 billion in 2008.

The study finds that job losses caused by such piracy will not be offset by new employment opportunities in the technology sector.

The music industry today has created many new distribution models, through digital stores such as iTunes. Yet these face a competitor that operates without rules: piracy. Unlawful services, which account for up to 95 per cent of music downloaded worldwide, are the great unknown factor when it comes to predicting the future development of the creative industries online.

If governments do not commit themselves to action, the market cannot grow as it should. Recorded music was the first sector to be hit by online piracy, but today it affects many other sectors.

It is often said that the internet should offer free access to information and this must be safeguarded to preserve freedom of speech. This is correct, but it cannot justify the abuse of creators' rights online. It is not censorship when a judge restricts access to illegal copyright infringing music or movies.

France has adopted legislation that prioritises the protection of culture over the right to unfettered indiscriminate access to content. In the UK, the Digital Economy Bill aims to boost the availability of broadband connections and combat piracy at the same time. They recognise that figures on the number of jobs lost to piracy may be dramatic and reflect a real level of social damage. They also realise that without action on piracy, investment in discovering and developing artists is also threatened.

Italy must also recognise this problem and rise to the challenge of tackling piracy and promoting the cultural sector in the digital age.

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