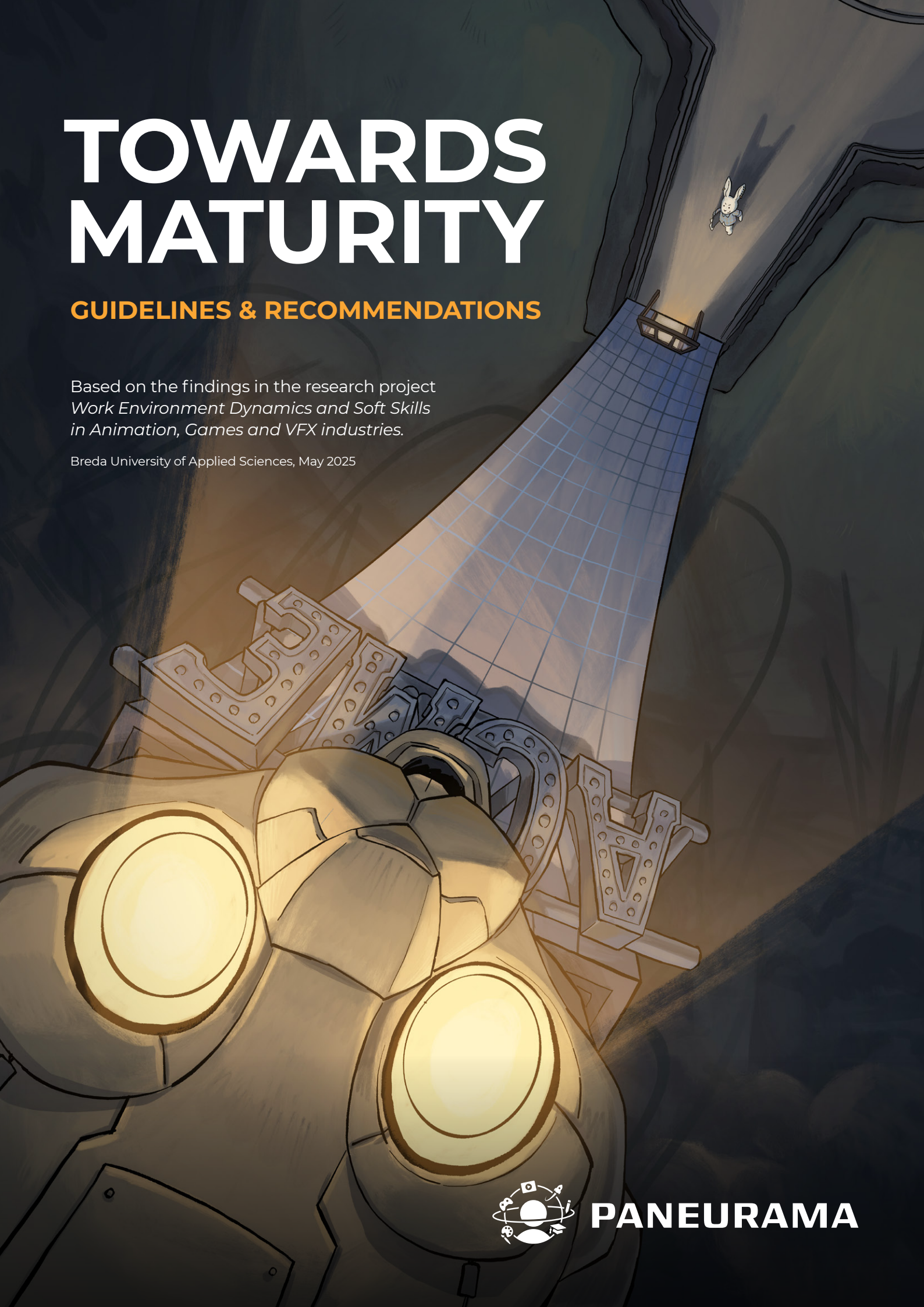
TOWARDS MATURITY

GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in the research project
Work Environment Dynamics and Soft Skills in Animation, Games and VFX industries.

Breda University of Applied Sciences, May 2025



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The PANEURAMA Guidelines & Recommendations 2025: TOWARDS MATURITY

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Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Animation, Games, and VFX Industries (2025)

New Technologies in the Animation, Games, and VFX Industries (2026)

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PANEURAMA
GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS 2025

PANEURAMA launches the following first set of Guidelines and Recommendations, based on the activities in our Innovation Labs of 2024 and the findings of the research project Work Environment Dynamics and Soft Skills in Animation, Games and VFX industries by Silke Hassreiter, Breda University of Applied Sciences.

Guidelines and Recommendations are edited, systematized and directed to four different sectors of stakeholders in the European audiovisual Industry:

1. **Education and Training**
2. **Audiovisual Industry**
3. **Young Professionals**
4. **Political and Strategical Level**

GENERAL INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE URGENCY?

Work Environment Dynamics and Soft Skills in Animation, Games, and VFX Industries was chosen as the first research project of the PANEURAMA Innovation Alliance because it addresses one of the most urgent and foundational challenges in the European media sector: the gap between the envisioned work life of an artist and the realities of required technical excellence, communication skills, available funding and investment, and the need for sustainable, human-centred professional practices. Each of these elements plays a critical role in enabling creativity to flourish and in shaping whether professionals remain motivated and can pursue long-term careers within the industry.

The animation, games, and VFX industries are driven by passion, artistic creativity and innovation, but they are also marked by intense workflows, high pressure, unstable funding and business, and a growing need for international collaboration. As the sector grows, so does the need to mature it for better understanding of how soft skills, interpersonal dynamics, team culture, and leadership affect productivity, well-being, and talent retention.

BY STARTING WITH THIS RESEARCH FOCUS, PANEURAMA AIMS TO:

- **Build a shared knowledge base across European ecosystems**
- **Promote healthier and more inclusive work environments**
- **Equip educators and companies with tools to train not only technical skills, but also emotional intelligence, communication, and collaborative competencies**
- **Empower new generations of professional artists to articulate their expectations and help shape the standards of future work environments**
- **Make new generations of professionals aware of the real-world demands and challenges of their future workplaces in the industry.**

This foundation sets the tone for the rest of the PANEURAMA research program, ensuring that future innovation in content, technology, and business is rooted in sustainable human development.


ACME

EDUCATION & TRAINING



To bridge the gap between education and industry, PANEURAMA encourages educational institutions, educators, coordinators, and relevant decision-makers to study the Guidelines and Recommendations and consider how the suggested elements can be integrated into educational curricula and the mindsets of academic faculty.

While artistic and technical skills remain crucial, educators and trainers face growing pressure to prepare students for the collaborative, dynamic, and often high-pressure work environments in the industry. This section of PANEURAMA Guidelines & Recommendations gives advice on how educational institutions and training programs can better adapt to meet these demands, identifying areas where alignment with industry needs can be strengthened, with particular emphasis on soft skills like teamwork, communication, and adaptability.

GUIDELINES

DEVELOP SPECIALIZED TRAINING

Focus on blending technical skills with industry-valued soft skills like teamwork, adaptability, and creative problem-solving.

In the fast-paced worlds of animation, games, and visual effects, artistic skills and technical excellence alone is no longer enough. As production pipelines grow more collaborative and international, studios are increasingly seeking professionals who can combine creative mastery with strong soft skills – teamwork, adaptability, communication, and problem-solving.

This shift calls for a rethinking of how we train future talent. Specialized education must move beyond artistic training and technical instruction to embed soft skill development directly into the learning experience. The goal isn't to add extra courses, but to design training environments that reflect the real dynamics of industry collaboration.

Simulated team productions, structured peer feedback, and scenario-based learning are powerful ways to achieve this. For example, introducing changes mid-project forces students to adapt under pressure, just as they would in a professional setting. Assigning rotating team roles encourages leadership and accountability, while reflection sessions help build emotional intelligence and self-awareness.

Crucially, this integrated training model should be developed in close dialogue with the industry. Studios, educators, and industry professionals should co-design programs that reflect both current needs and future trends.

The result: graduates who are not only artistically skilled and technically proficient but also prepared to contribute meaningfully from day one in their first job.

INTEGRATE REAL-WORLD SCENARIOS

Ensure curriculum reflects practical work environments. Stage simulations of production in collaboration with companies, thereby helping students adapt to the industry's dynamic nature.

To prepare students for the realities of the creative industries, training programs must mirror professional environments. This means integrating real-world scenarios directly into the curriculum. One such effective method is to stage simulated production processes in collaboration with industry partners. These simulations expose students to the newest technology, pressures, teamwork, feedback loops, and deadlines typical of animation, games, and VFX workflows.

By working on projects that reflect the industry's dynamic nature, students not only sharpen their technical skills but also develop adaptability, communication, and problem-solving abilities. These immersive experiences create a smoother transition from education to employment and foster a deeper understanding of how creativity functions in real-world production settings.

This specific guideline may conflict with the requirements of accredited educational programs to primarily employ permanent academic staff, thereby limiting the ability to engage active industry professionals as trainers. In the animation, games, and VFX sectors, such constraints warrant critical examination. They must be challenged, as they risk becoming an obstacle in a field characterized by rapid shifts in both work culture and technological innovation. Increasingly, students express concern that *the content and delivery of their education do not adequately reflect the realities of contemporary professional practice within the industry.*

PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING FOR STUDENTS

Encourage continuous skill updates to keep pace with fast-evolving tech and trends. While making sure to teach the basics of visual art, also make sure that students will know how to learn and adapt to change without losing their integrity and intention.

In the rapidly changing landscape of the creative visual industries, training must go beyond current tools and trends. Programs should encourage a mindset of lifelong learning, where students are equipped not only with strong fundamentals in visual art but also with the ability to adapt and grow.

The need for strong fundamentals for art students will never disappear, as the ability to perform the art relies on imaginative strength, a professional sense of color and design, strong drawing skills, and more. These are the elements that make it truly engaging to be in the flow of creation. They are the personal skills that allow the professional artist to manifest intention in the creative process – preserving the human core of visual storytelling and ensuring that we are meaningfully practicing visual art, not merely reduced to being "content creators."

The tools of expression and production will undoubtedly change – and change again – over the course of a creative career. This makes it essential to teach students *how* to learn: to remain curious, self-directed,

and open to change, while holding on to their artistic integrity and sense of purpose. By embedding reflective practices, critical thinking, and adaptability into the curriculum, we ensure that graduates are not only skilled today but also equipped to evolve with the industry tomorrow.

PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE VALUE OF INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Educational institutions play a crucial role in helping students understand the distinction between the entry-level skill sets of recent graduates and the added value that comes with years of professional experience – regardless of initial talent or technical proficiency. This perspective is essential for managing expectations, preparing students for a realistic career trajectory as juniors, and reducing the risk of early-stage disillusionment.

Industry stakeholders emphasise the importance of making it clear that wages are influenced by a range of factors beyond skill alone, including experience, reliability, collaboration, and broader economic conditions. Providing students with a foundational understanding of the industry's economic dynamics can help them better comprehend their position in the field and develop realistic, informed expectations.

ENSURE LIFELONG LEARNING FOR TEACHING STAFF

Allocate realistic time for their ongoing professional development and to provide opportunities for meaningful connections with the industry to help them stay up-to-date and engaged with current trends.

For the same reasons, lifelong learning must be integrated into the professional lives of educators, coordinators, and key decision-makers across the academic faculty. There has long been a tendency toward isolation within academia, where a strong focus on narrow specialisations does not necessarily align with developments in the industry. Academic staff are often subject to time constraints and performance pressures imposed by institutional structures, which may drive them to prioritise areas and outputs that are misaligned with industry needs.

While this is not universally the case, educational institutions should ensure that the development of their faculty is aligned with industry developments. This can be achieved by fostering collaboration with companies through practice-based development projects, conducting research relevant to industry demands, and establishing meaningful connections with professionals in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INDUSTRY-EDUCATION COLLABORATION

Increase partnerships between institutions and industry for guest lectures, mentorships, and workshops.

Strengthen ties between education and industry by establishing regular partnerships for guest lectures, mentorships, and hands-on workshops. These connections offer students and educators valuable real-world insights and help align academic training with professional expectations. Involving active industry professionals in the classroom is a key step toward bridging the gap between education and industry practice.

The selection of guest speakers can also support gender diversity by including successful female professionals, giving young women the opportunity to see and connect with role models in the field.

FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODELS

Adopt hybrid models, combining online and hands-on sessions, to foster both technical mastery and flexibility.
Organize informal self-conducted learning spaces.
Balance practice-based learning over academic practice.

Implement hybrid learning structures that combine online modules with in-person, hands-on sessions. Encourage informal, self-directed learning environments where students can experiment and collaborate across disciplines, while beginning to develop their areas of specialisation. Emphasise practice-based learning that mirrors real studio conditions, while integrating essential theoretical components – fostering both technical proficiency and creative independence.

The concept of “failing forward” is vital in practice-based education. In a world that often demands perfection, students must learn that failure is a natural and valuable part of the learning process. Cultivating a constructive attitude toward failure – one that is highly valued in the industry – should be an integral part of their educational experience.

FEEDBACK-DRIVEN PROGRAMS

Use industry and student feedback to shape course adjustments, ensuring alignment with current needs.

Develop responsive educational models by integrating continuous feedback from both students and industry partners. Regular evaluations and consultations can inform course adjustments, ensuring that the curriculum evolves alongside professional demands. This iterative approach helps maintain relevance, improve teaching quality, and better prepare students for the realities of the job market.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Early exposure to leadership principles can help students navigate workplace dynamics with more confidence.

Introduce Leadership training for undergraduate students, particularly to support their group work. Many young professional artists feel unprepared and unsupported in group settings, especially when compared to more structured, skill-based roles. Early exposure to leadership principles could help them navigate these dynamics with more confidence. It can also help equip possible future leaders with new leadership models that are more in tune with current industry needs – rather than outdated models that many current leaders have been socialised into.

STRONG APPLICANTS

Prepare students to be not just ideal employees, but also strong applicants.

Working in the audiovisual industry demands a high degree of adaptability, as professionals frequently shift between short-term jobs and freelance roles. Students must therefore be equipped not only to perform well in roles but also to present themselves as strong job applicants. Curricula should include development of hard skills, portfolio/showreel building, structured networking, and targeted career guidance. This involves early specialisation, industry-relevant mentoring, and exposure to entrepreneurial approaches, as outlined in the relevant sections of the report.

INTERNATIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

An international learning environment reflects the realities of the industry, strengthens the overall talent pool, and enhances students' language skills.

In the animation, games, and VFX industries, it is standard to work in globally diverse teams with colleagues from many different countries – both within and beyond Europe. When both the students and teachers of an educational program are internationally composed, it reflects the realities of the industry and prepares students for their future careers. At the same time, students develop intercultural competencies and enhance their English language skills.

AGENTS OF CHANGE

Constructive Communication – emphasize the importance of knowing when and how to speak up

Role-playing exercises can help highlight the importance of knowing when and how to speak up. Students should learn not only when to raise concerns, but also how to do so effectively. This includes building strong, well-reasoned arguments, demonstrating an understanding of existing practices before offering critique, and presenting clear, constructive proposals for change.

Providing examples of how to communicate suggestions in a solution-focused and respectful manner will offer valuable guidance. Encouraging students to be proactive in shaping their environments – while respecting established processes—can foster more positive and productive dialogue in their future workplaces.

LIFE OUTSIDE THE BUBBLE

Support students in developing interests and relationships beyond their professional focus.

Engaging in non-work-related social and creative activities not only contributes to a healthier lifestyle but also serves as a vital source of innovation and artistic inspiration.

Education should actively encourage students to explore experiences outside their core discipline to broaden their perspectives and enrich their creative practice. While it's valuable to support students in turning hobbies into careers, educators should also promote the discovery of entirely new interests during their studies. Students who cultivate personal hobbies, friendships, life in nature, away from the screen, outside the 'professional bubble,' become well-rounded individuals who bring diverse insights into their work.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Prepare students to communicate, both in virtual and real work environments.

Younger professionals often demonstrate strong teamwork skills in virtual environments, sometimes surpassing older generations in online communication. However, some face challenges when it comes to engaging effectively in face-to-face conversations in the workplace. In certain cases, they may not only struggle with in-person interactions but also fail to fully understand their importance and effectiveness in team dynamics.

Industry stakeholders emphasise the need for educational institutions to place greater focus on developing interpersonal communication skills – ensuring these are practiced and refined alongside virtual collaboration abilities.

STRESS-REDUCTION TOOLS

Methods that can strengthen students' mental resilience and help them cope with the challenges of the industry.

Introduce Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) or other qualified methods that can be developed into lasting habits, thereby strengthening students' mental resilience and helping them cope with the pressure of potential crunch periods and industry challenges.

BUILDING NETWORKS

Encourage Collaboration and Peer Support – Facilitate that the students build their first network together.

Educational institutions should actively support students in building their first professional networks during their studies. Students should be encouraged to share workloads, act as peer career advisors, and provide mutual support—both professionally and mentally. This includes helping one another identify job opportunities and developing collaborative habits that reflect real-world industry dynamics.

By fostering these relationships early, students can form a lasting support system that extends beyond the academic setting. As highlighted in the report, such peer-driven collaboration strengthens career readiness, improves resilience, and enhances long-term industry connections.

OTHER CAREERS

Raise awareness of career opportunities beyond traditional creative industries.

Education lays the foundation for students' entire working lives. Raising awareness of career opportunities beyond the traditional creative industries could involve exposing students to roles in adjacent sectors, helping them build networks across these fields, and broadening their perspective – from seeing themselves solely as artists immersed in the flow of creation to understanding that paid work is essential for a sustainable professional life.

An equally relevant challenge for educational staff is to prepare professionals from other industries to collaborate effectively with creatives, who often work with different workflows, technologies, and planning processes.

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Maturing the industry by equipping the students with the mindset of healthy work-life balance.

New generations of graduates entering the industry can act as agents of change. By being conscious, vocal, collaborative, and leading by example, they can help shape more sustainable and humane workplaces, nudging the industry toward greater maturity from within.

This requires that the educations uphold and promote the ideal of a healthy work-life balance throughout the learning journey, while also creating space for students to "fail forward" in the process of creative flow and artistic exploration. If this takes place under supervision and open dialogue it will allow students to find and balance their personal imaginative forces with their human limitations, while professionalizing their imaginations and the skills needed to express them.

RESPONSIBILITY

As a final set of recommendations to stakeholders in education and training it is that educational institutions must recognise their responsibility.

Educational institutions exist to serve the students and the job market in need for skills, not the other way around. The role of education is not only to transmit knowledge but also to shape capable, responsible, and empowered individuals who can contribute meaningfully to their communities and industries while building long, sustainable working lives.

The animation and games industries have a strong appeal for young dreamers with vivid imaginations. Many of the selected students have spent years developing their talents and skills before entering formal education. These students place significant trust in their educational institutions as gateways into what they perceive as an exciting and fulfilling industry.

THIS PLACES A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY ON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TRAINING PROVIDERS TO:

- **Offer transparent, industry-relevant educational programs**
- **Select candidates with the potential to build sustainable professional careers**
- **Avoid making unrealistic promises regarding employability and job market conditions**
- **Ensure continuous and relevant development of both curriculum and staff**
- **Refrain from using misleading marketing materials featuring imagery from industry blockbusters**
- **Adjust the intake of candidates and output of graduates to the actual need of the market.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INDUSTRY

Overall, industry experts acknowledge and value the proactive steps taken by certain educational institutions to continuously adapt their curricula to meet the evolving demands of the industry. There is a strong commitment among industry stakeholders to engage in open dialogue, aiming to enhance the preparation of graduates to become well-equipped to contribute effectively to a sustainable workforce.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INDUSTRY EXPERTS TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

- **Prepare students effectively for both roles: as adaptable team players and competitive self-promoters with strong portfolios, seamlessly switching between these roles.**
- **Foster a mindset of lifelong learning, teaching students to independently stay updated on industry needs and engage in self-improvement.**
- **Create a safe learning environment where students can experiment, find innovative solutions, and learn from mistakes.**
- **Instil confidence in students' work quality while emphasising humility and the value of experience for career progression and realistic wage expectations.**
- **Teach students the broader context of their work within production teams, client roles, and audience considerations, encouraging openness to constructive feedback and collaborative problem-solving.**
- **Enhance students' intercultural, interdisciplinary and intergenerational communication skills across diverse international teams and industries beyond traditional sectors.**
- **Encourage students to explore interests outside their 'professional bubble' to foster personal growth and diverse perspectives.**
- **Prepare students for global opportunities by emphasising relocation readiness and English proficiency.**
- **Promote a healthy work-life balance and effective management of overtime, advocating for fair compensation and fostering an activist mindset for industry improvement (including discerning when activism is appropriate and strategically beneficial).**
- **Initiate discussions on creating friendly, healthy, and sustainable work environments and dynamics, addressing diversity, inclusion, and industry ethics.**





AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY

To enhance both the work environment and productivity within the audiovisual industry, PANEURAMA recommends that all European companies – whether large studios, small animation and VFX firms, game development teams, or startups – study these guidelines and consider how they can integrate the described elements into daily practice.

Many larger companies have already established policies and strategies to foster a positive work environment. These measures often began as responses to specific incidents that highlighted the need for change. These measures serve to support employees' well-being, maintain a healthy company culture, and improve overall performance. However, for many small to medium-sized companies and startups – often driven by a close-knit group of founders and early team members – such strategies may be uncharted territory. As these companies scale up, they face the challenge of maintaining the camaraderie and flexibility of their early days while building a sustainable work culture that will grow with them.

INTRODUCING ESG TO THE EUROPEAN AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles offer a strategic framework for building a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient audiovisual industry in Europe. By integrating ESG into company strategies, studios and producers can not only reduce their environmental footprint, but also foster healthier work environments, promote diversity, and ensure transparent, ethical leadership. As audiences, investors, and policymakers increasingly demand accountability, implementing ESG practices strengthens long-term business viability and reputation. Embracing ESG is not just good ethics – it's smart strategy for companies aiming to lead in a rapidly evolving creative economy.

The following guidelines and recommendations provided here are meant to inspire larger companies to further refine their practices and to offer smaller companies a roadmap toward building a more inclusive, creative, and content workforce.

GUIDELINES

ENCOURAGE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Address work conditions in studios by creating more sustainable schedules to prevent burnout.

CREATE PREDICTABLE, SUSTAINABLE SCHEDULES

Unpredictable workloads and extended crunch periods are key drivers of burnout. Studios should plan realistic timelines with built-in buffers and avoid last-minute overhauls. Regularly reviewing schedules with the team helps maintain steady, manageable workflows.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUE AND FLEXIBILITY

A culture of open communication around workload and well-being allows early identification of stress. Offer flexible work options like remote days or adjustable hours, helping staff balance personal and professional needs.

PROMOTE BREAKS AND TIME OFF

Creative output suffers without proper rest. Encourage regular daily breaks, full lunch periods, and ensure staff take their vacation time. Even occasional mental health days can go a long way in preventing burnout.

FOSTER COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACES

Create team-oriented structures to promote effective communication and mutual support.

ESTABLISH CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM STRUCTURES

Encourage collaboration by forming teams that bring together diverse skill sets across departments. This approach promotes knowledge sharing and a holistic understanding of projects. Regular inter-departmental meetings can further strengthen these connections, ensuring that all team members are aligned and can contribute effectively.

IMPLEMENT SHARED DIGITAL WORKSPACES

Utilize collaborative tools such as shared project management platforms and communication channels to maintain transparency and streamline workflows. These tools allow team members to access project updates, share feedback, and coordinate tasks efficiently, regardless of their physical location.

PROMOTE CULTURE OF OPEN COMMUNICATION

Foster an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing ideas, feedback, and concerns. Regular check-ins, open forums, and feedback sessions can help in building trust and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard. This culture of openness can lead to increased innovation, a stronger sense of community within the team and more loyalty and feeling of ownership towards the company.

FOCUS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Embrace varied perspectives in storytelling
and content creation by encouraging diverse hiring.

IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Revise job descriptions and recruitment materials to use inclusive language that appeals to a broad range of candidates. Ensure that job postings are free from biased language and clearly communicate the company's commitment to diversity. Additionally, consider anonymizing applications during the initial screening process to minimize unconscious bias.

ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS WITH DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS

Collaborate with educational institutions, community organizations, and professional associations that serve underrepresented groups. These partnerships can help in reaching a wider talent pool and provide opportunities for mentorship programs, internships, and workshops that support diverse candidates entering the industry.

FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

Create an environment where all employees feel valued and included. This involves providing diversity and inclusion training, encouraging open dialogues about inclusivity, and establishing employee resource groups that support various identities and experiences. Regularly assess company policies and practices to ensure they promote equity and address any systemic barriers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OFFER MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Introduce programs supporting employee well-being, managing the pressures of project-based work, reducing stress and building resilience.

Introduce *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction* (MBSR) or other qualified methods that can be developed into lasting habits, thereby strengthening employees' mental resilience and helping them cope with pressure. This can include structured programs, but even simple practices – like taking daily walks in a nearby park or forest, away from the desk and screen – can yield remarkable results. Humans are social beings, made to move, to breathe, and to connect with nature.

CO-PRODUCTION CONSEQUENCES

Be aware that your business plan can have both positive and negative impacts on your partners.

The financial benefits of co-production often favor the production companies that define the budgets. However, this can lead to work environment challenges and stress for partners further down the chain. Building long-lasting, positive partnerships should be grounded in a shared commitment to fostering a healthy and sustainable work environment throughout the entire pipeline – not in the exploitation of those in need of work.

REGULAR INDUSTRY NETWORKING

Participate in events to strengthen professional connections, knowledge/skill building and talent exchanges.

Regularly invite the employees of the company to participate in regional or international networking events, training or other forms of events, that can develop their skills, build knowledge, expand their professional network and broaden their horizons. Urge employees to participate in Innovation Labs and Collaborative Projects allowing them to collaborate with peers and industry experts, experiment and fail forward in a low-risk environment. These experiences can challenge their imagination, reignite passion, train new artistic and technical skills and provide valuable networking opportunities.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Establish Formalized Collaboration with Educational Institutions

European companies are encouraged to build long-term partnerships with educational institutions and to engage their more experienced employees as guest instructors. Such collaboration will help ensure that educational programs remain relevant and aligned with industry needs, while also bringing fresh knowledge, perspectives, and talent networks back into the company.

These partnerships should be given the same strategic importance as production, with an understanding that educational institutions operate with long planning horizons that require early and sustained coordination.

CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR FORMALIZED COLLABORATION WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- **Companies can allocate paid time for staff to engage in mentorship or deliver guest lectures at selected educational institutions.**
- **Companies can offer internships, actively providing students with hands-on experience and professional mentoring.**
- **Industry representatives can visit universities for meet-and-greet sessions, offering opportunities to connect with students beyond their portfolios.**
- **Leveraging student peer networks and asking for student recommendations can help identify promising future employees with relevant specialisations.**

It is also valuable for industry professionals to engage directly in education and mentorship – not only benefiting students but also creating opportunities for educators. This could include internships or industry placements for lecturers, allowing them to update their skills and stay in touch with current industry practices.

Finally, addressing non-disclosure agreement (NDA) issues – highlighted in the report – could help remove barriers and unlock new opportunities for collaboration between industry and academia.



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS





The European animation and VFX industry are evolving rapidly. The increasing turnover will slowly stabilize the industry, thereby creating more solid conditions for a good work environment, allowing an increasing focus on *collaboration, adaptability,* and *well-being*. As a young professional entering this dynamic field, art and technical skills alone are no longer enough. Neither artistic vision nor personal ambition.

As a professional artist – regardless of your role in the pipeline – you likely entered the industry driven by the ambition to be either a central creator of visual storytelling or a valuable contributor to the process. Many of us were drawn by the dream of making a living through imagination, working in creative flow, and sharing that space with a community of like-minded professionals. Now, it is time to turn that dream into a lasting reality. To do so, we must ensure that the workplace is a safe space – one that protects us, as much as possible, from the pressures of exploitation.

The following guidelines and recommendations – based on findings from the PANEURAMA Report and discussions in our innovation labs – offer essential insights to help you build a sustainable, fulfilling career and be an agent of change in the companies you will work in. They highlight the importance of *soft skills, continuous learning, professional networking*, and *personal development* in shaping not just successful artists, but resilient and engaged contributors to what becomes a thriving creative European industry.

GUIDELINES

1. CULTIVATE ADAPTABILITY AND COLLABORATION

Embrace a team-oriented mindset. The industry now values adaptable, humble team players over individual "rockstars." Be open to feedback and willing to adjust your approach and creative imagination to meeting team and project needs

2. BALANCE HARD AND SOFT SKILLS

While technical proficiency is essential, equally important are soft skills like imagination, creativity, communication, empathy, and teamwork. Develop a well-rounded skill set that includes both your craft and interpersonal abilities.

3. MAINTAIN WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Prioritize your well-being to sustain healthy imagination, creativity and productivity – make sure to set and communicate boundaries to prevent burnout and ensure long-term career satisfaction

4. ENGAGE IN LIFELONG LEARNING

Stay updated with industry trends and continuously seek opportunities to learn and grow – Participate in workshops, courses, training and other educational activities to enhance your skills

5. SEEK DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Engage in projects that expose you to different roles, technologies, and cultures – Diverse experiences can broaden your perspective and enhance your adaptability.

CHANGING THE CULTURE

Challenge your workplace – By understanding the journey of the company you are employed by you can actively help. Young professionals don't need seniority to influence culture. By being conscious, vocal, collaborative, and setting a good example, you can help shape more sustainable and humane workplaces – nudging the industry toward maturity from the inside.

That said, **it's important to know *when* and *how* to speak up**. It's not just about raising concerns, but doing so effectively. This means building strong, well-reasoned arguments. By showing that you understand the reasoning behind existing practices before offering criticism, you earn respect and create space for your perspective to be taken seriously. Knowing how to propose change in a constructive, solution-focused way is essential. Even if your suggestions aren't immediately implemented, your voice will have been heard – and that can be the first step toward meaningful change. Young professionals entering the often-unstable audiovisual industry – especially in animation and VFX – may feel like they have limited influence, but they can play a key role in helping companies mature and create better work environments. Here are several ways they can contribute:

1. BRING FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND VALUES

- Young professionals often prioritize **mental health, diversity, inclusion, and work-life balance** more than previous generations.
- By **voicing these values** early and consistently, they help shift studio culture and expectations.
- Asking questions like *"How is feedback handled here?"* or *"What are your policies on overtime?"* signals that healthy work culture matters.

2. LEAD BY EXAMPLE IN COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- Good communication and soft skills can **influence team dynamics**, even from junior roles.
- Practicing **empathy, respectful dialogue, and constructive feedback** helps normalize these behaviours in the wider team.

3. ENCOURAGE PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT

- Form or engage in informal support networks among juniors and interns.
- Peer groups can **prevent isolation**, provide emotional backup, and promote **knowledge sharing**, especially when onboarding processes are weak.

4. PROVIDE FEEDBACK—RESPECTFULLY AND CLEARLY

- Many studios lack mechanisms for feedback. Young professionals can help by giving **clear, respectful input** about onboarding, task clarity, or workload.
- Even small feedback can prompt **improvements in internal processes**, especially when echoed by others.

5. EMBRACE AND ADVOCATE FOR LEARNING CULTURE

- Encourage **learning opportunities**, skill-sharing sessions, or "lunch & learn" moments.
- Promoting a culture of **ongoing learning** (rather than *fear of failure*) is a crucial part of a positive work environment.

6. STAY INFORMED AND ORGANIZED

- Understanding your **rights as a worker**, as well as the broader industry context, empowers young professionals to speak up effectively.
- Participating in **professional associations, unions, or networks** can amplify their voice and bring collective change.

7. PROMOTE ETHICAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- As AI and automation rises, younger workers often have the digital fluency to **raise important questions** about ethics, creative ownership, and humane workflows.
- Their awareness can help guide companies toward **more responsible adoption** of tech.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

1. PARTICIPATE IN INNOVATION LABS AND COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Seek to engage in programs where you can collaborate with peers and industry experts, experiment and *fail forward* in a low-risk environment. These experiences can challenge your imagination, reignite your passion, train new artistic and technical skills and provide valuable networking opportunities.

2. BUILD A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Connect with industry professionals through events, online platforms, and mentorship programs. A strong network can provide support, guidance, and potential job opportunities. Maintain and make use of the contacts from your education network. You are all in the same situation and can support each other.

3. DEVELOP A PERSONAL BRAND

Showcase your work and professional journey through a portfolio, social media, or a personal website. Highlight both your artistic skills, technical skills and your collaborative projects to present a comprehensive view of your capabilities. Update it! Maintain it! *This is the impression the world has of you.*

4. BE PROACTIVE IN CAREER PLANNING

Set clear career goals and seek opportunities that align with your aspiration. Regularly assess your progress and adjust your plans as needed to stay on track.

5. EMBRACE FEEDBACK AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

Solicit feedback from peers and mentors to identify areas for improvement. Engage in self-reflection to understand your strengths and areas for growth.

ADVICE FROM THE INDUSTRY: 10 KEY DIMENSIONS OF ADAPTABILITY

According to reflections from stakeholders in the industry, the 10 key dimensions of adaptability for the 'ideal employee' in the games, animation, and VFX industry are:

- **Team collaboration**
- **Flexible and proactive problem-solving**
- **Continuous and proactive skill development**
- **Client orientation**
- **Receptiveness to feedback**
- **Cultural competence**
- **Interdisciplinary, hierarchical and intergenerational communication**
- **Flexibility in managing overtime and work-life balance**
- **Creative inspiration from outside of work**
- **Willingness to relocate and English language proficiency**

TEAM COLLABORATION

Teamwork and collective responsibility in games, animation, and VFX industries are important. The work requires effective daily collaboration, as projects often involve multiple specialists working together on different aspects. It is crucial for industry professionals to work closely, adhere to standard procedures, and manage the pressure of relying on each other's contributions in a safe space to ensure overall quality and efficiency.

There have been significant changes in work ethos in recent years. Reduced crunch time, increased emphasis on work-life balance, and a greater focus on diversity and inclusion, requires that different generations within the industry reflect varying approaches to working. It is crucial for new employees to find ways to collaborate effectively with colleagues from different generations, and with different work ethos. Bridging these gaps together as a team is essential to developing a more suitable, healthy, and effective work environment and dynamics for everyone.

#FAILINGFORWARD: FLEXIBLE AND PRO-ACTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

In addition to having strong collaborative skills, participants emphasised the importance of flexible and proactive problem-solving skills. The ideal professional should not only excel at problem-solving but also genuinely enjoy it. It is a part of the job. Having a proactive and positive attitude towards challenges is crucial, with a flexible mindset and a willingness to experiment with different solutions until you find what works best. It might be challenging but it is considered part of professionalism within a fast-paced

and creative field by that employees are constantly making the best out of every situation and persistently seek solutions.

As a young professional in the creative industry, you'll grow faster and gain more respect by embracing independent problem-solving. Don't be afraid to tackle challenges on your own – use your judgment to decide when to try solving an issue yourself, and when to escalate it. Avoid waiting until a mistake becomes unmanageable; instead, be proactive and take ownership early. Remember, mistakes aren't something to fear, they're part of the creative journey. Adopt a failing forward mindset, be bold, experiment, learn from what doesn't work, and try again. This approach will build your confidence, sharpen your decision-making skills, and make you a stronger, more trusted team member.

LIFELONG LEARNING: CONTINUOUS AND PROACTIVE SKILL ADAPTATION

Commitment to lifelong learning is important. Staying updated is crucial at all levels of hierarchy, as technical skills can quickly become outdated. Employees are expected to continuously engage in critical self-reflection to realistically align their skill sets with technological developments and industry demands throughout their career. Some more established companies support this by allocating time within projects for skill development, while others expect their employees to continue learning in their own time.

Even recently educated young professionals must focus to stay current with industry and technology changes and trends and proactively update their skills to remain relevant. The industry expects continuous proactive self-improvement, particularly given the increasing prevalence of artificial intelligence (AI).

The 'ideal employee' is also expected to actively share their skills and be open to learning from others regardless of hierarchical status. They envision an environment where the 'ideal employee' proactively contributes to and nurtures a collaborative learning atmosphere, prioritising knowledge sharing over competition.

The industry knows that remote work environments present challenges to these ideals, and that solutions for remote work are still mostly lacking. This situation is particularly challenging for junior professionals, who require constant guidance from more experienced colleagues or mentors to accelerate their growth.

Lifelong learning involves the need for patience, humility, and gradual skill development through experience. Young professionals often have unrealistic expectations about their career progression, expecting rapid promotions and high salaries without fully understanding the time and effort required to gain experience and produce independently high-level output. Students and young professionals frequently overestimate their skills and the quality of their work and overlook the significant investment companies make in their training during the initial months, which may exceed the value they initially contribute.

As you begin your career, it's important to understand the distinction between entry-level skills and the long-term value that comes with experience. Even if you're highly skilled from the start, employers place strong value on years of professional practice, reliability, and your ability to work within real-world production environments.

Set realistic expectations for your early career! Most professionals begin in junior roles and grow over time. This is not a reflection of your potential, but part of a natural progression in the industry.

Also keep in mind that wages are influenced by more than just your technical abilities. Factors such as experience, collaboration skills, and the overall economic conditions of the industry all play a role. Taking time to understand how the industry operates—its financial structures, project cycles, and job markets – will help you better navigate your first years and build a sustainable, fulfilling career.

CLIENT ORIENTATION

Professionals understand that no production occurs in isolation. This includes recognising the broader context of the work – such as the roles of clients and the intended audience. Employees must be prepared to set aside personal ego, remain flexible, and prioritise a client-focused approach, adapting to changes driven by evolving client needs.

Meeting tight deadlines, delivering work on time, and staying within budget are all essential aspects of professional responsibility. This requires an understanding of the roles of producers and executive-level managers, and the ability to collaborate effectively with them – viewing them not as obstacles, but as essential partners in managing financial and time-related constraints.

RECEPTIVENESS TO FEEDBACK

The ability to integrate client input and feedback aligns with the broader theme of receiving and working with feedback effectively. It is of importance being open to feedback and critique from colleagues and supervisors, highlighting it as a fundamental aspect of one's skill set. Feedback should be both approached in a humble way and with receptiveness, regardless of one's position or the position of the feedback provider. Feedback should always be perceived as constructive rather than personal, and it should be critically assessed and integrated into both production and self-improvement processes.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Openness to feedback and cultural competence are intricately connected dimensions of adaptability within the global industry context. Cultural competence involves not only a willingness to listen, learn, and adapt based on feedback that goes beyond technical aspects but also encompasses broader cultural insights. The 'ideal employee' is expected to provide and receive constructive feedback effectively across diverse cultural settings. They should seamlessly integrate into diverse teams and actively contribute to inclusive workplace environments where diverse perspectives, values, and norms are not only acknowledged but also respected and integrated into collaborative efforts. This ability to navigate and appreciate cultural diversity enhances team cohesion and effectiveness in global industry settings.

INTERDISCIPLINARY, HIERARCHICAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

To work effectively within a team, maintaining clear and respectful communication across different settings is essential. This includes the ability to set aside personal ego, respect hierarchical structures when appropriate, communicate professionally with clients, and collaborate across disciplines within the production pipeline. Strong communication fosters collaboration, helps resolve conflicts, and ensures alignment toward shared goals – the ultimate objective of any team effort.

In virtual settings, younger professionals often demonstrate strong teamwork skills, sometimes surpassing those of older generations. However, some younger professionals may struggle with in-person interactions in the workplace. In certain cases, they may not fully appreciate the importance or effectiveness of face-to-face communication in fostering collaboration and team cohesion. Developing interpersonal skills alongside virtual communication abilities is therefore crucial.

Working within interdisciplinary pipelines further highlights the need for effective cross-functional communication. This involves understanding the specific terminology used by different team members, recognising their roles within the production process, and understanding how their work connects to and impacts your own.

FLEXIBLE WHILE MAINTAINING A SUSTAINABLE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

As the industry evolves toward healthier work environments, it's important to be adaptable – but not at the cost of your well-being. Be mindful of your working hours and aim to maintain a sustainable work-life balance. Overtime may be required at times, but it should be compensated. Some companies still expect long unpaid hours – this culture is changing, but not everywhere. Stand up for fair conditions and contribute to a healthier industry by setting boundaries and supporting ethical work practices. Be aware that generational differences may arise, but your perspective is part of that positive change.

CREATIVITY FROM OUTSIDE OF WORK ACTIVITIES

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance goes hand in hand with another essential skill: drawing creative inspiration from activities and relationships outside of work. Engaging in non-work-related social activities, spending time in nature, and nurturing relationships beyond the professional sphere are not only valuable sources of innovative thinking but also important for your overall well-being.

Don't let your creativity be confined to your job. Exploring interests and building connections outside of work supports your mental health and enriches your creative practice with fresh perspectives.

Make time to seek experiences beyond your field. Attend talks or courses in other areas – such as philosophy, science, or healthcare – to expand your thinking. While turning a hobby into a profession can be fulfilling, it's equally important to discover new interests and form friendships beyond your professional circle. These personal experiences can inspire your work in unexpected and meaningful ways.

OPEN TO RELOCATION AND SPEAKING ENGLISH

Be adaptable to where you live and work. The animation, games, and VFX industries are highly competitive and globally connected, being open to relocation can significantly increase your job opportunities.

Strong English skills are essential, not just for communication within international teams, but because most content is produced and marketed for global audiences. Fluency in English is a professional necessity in the European industry.

While international careers offer exciting opportunities, they also come with challenges like frequent job changes and balancing global appeal with local culture. Stay flexible, culturally aware, and ready to grow beyond borders.

ADVICE FOR CONTENT CREATORS

Whether you see yourself as an artist or a content creator, your success depends on your ability to understand – and position yourself within – the complex worlds of artistic expression, financing, production, target audiences, business models, and numerous other factors beyond your control.

Here is a list of insights for the artist or content creator who wants to better navigate the complexities of content creation in an evolving market.

1. EMBRACE AI AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Artificial intelligence is rapidly integrating into digital workflows, particularly enhancing virtual production. Young professionals should familiarize themselves with AI tools and technologies to remain competitive and innovative in the evolving landscape.

This is not an act of surrendering, but an act of learning how to utilize and master the new tools made available for your profession. The future digital workflows will still require employees and content creators with a strong imagination, a creative mind, strong artistic intentions and good communication skills.

The rise of AI will likely lead to an increase in production of generated glimmering and fast-moving content that lacks mind, heart, and sensory depth. But this will make it even more important to have skilled artistic content creators who can produce meaningful content with relevant human messages – content that can capture and engage the audience. And teach them to see the difference!

Like it or not, creators in the future audiovisual industry risk marginalizing themselves if they refuse to engage with the presence and influence of AI. What matters now is not just passive acceptance, but active participation in the ongoing discussions that will shape future regulations. It is essential to advocate for clear and fair frameworks—particularly regarding how copyrights, authorship, and creative ownership are defined and protected in an AI-driven landscape.

2. PRIORITIZE HUMAN-CENTERED STORYTELLING

Despite technological advancements, authentic storytelling remains paramount. Focus on narratives that resonate on a human level to connect with audiences meaningfully. *As technology advances, developing self-awareness and empathetic leadership is becoming increasingly important to balance creativity with digital transformation.* (Nostradamus Report 2024)

As a European creator, you are part of a region that values diversity, ethics, and cultural expression. Use these values to guide your content—and stand out in a global market flooded with data and content but hungry for meaning.

3. ENGAGE WITH THE CREATOR ECONOMY

The boundaries between traditional media and the creator economy are blurring. Engaging with platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and others can provide alternative avenues for content creation and audience engagement. The platforms and their various formats will change over time, but their presence in the attention span of the audience will probably not be diminished. Today the amount of European produced content is small compared to the amount of content produced in the US or Asia.

4. UNDERSTAND DATA DRIVEN CONTENT CREATION

The audiovisual industry is undergoing rapid change. Streaming platforms, gaming, and digital media now rely heavily on audience data to guide both creative and business decisions. As a creator, understanding how data shapes content will help you remain relevant and strategic.

However, understanding data does not mean blindly following trends. Even when the data suggests otherwise, your role is to tell human stories in a digital world. In a market where AI and automation are generating vast amounts of generic content, human-centered, emotionally intelligent storytelling will stand out. Your originality, cultural insight, and lived experience are powerful assets - ones no algorithm can replicate.



POLITICS & STRATEGY

THE PANEURAMA RESEARCH GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS 2025 AIMS TO ENSURE THAT FUTURE INNOVATION IN CONTENT, TECHNOLOGY, AND BUSINESS WITHIN THE EUROPEAN AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY IS FIRMLY ROOTED IN SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

The following recommendations is grounded in the current state of the European audiovisual and creative industries.

These recommendations reflect the understanding that, to improve work environments across the European media sector, we must first define what a healthy and sustainable work culture entails – and then determine how to achieve it. At the same time, it is essential to seriously consider how to support the maturation of the audiovisual industry from being primarily an artistic craft to becoming a fully developed and resilient content production sector. A stronger business foundation and greater financial stability within companies will, in turn, lead to better working conditions across the industry.

Europe boasts some of the world's top talent in animation, games and VFX production. However, the industry's smaller company sizes have in many years lead to a "brain drain," as the most skilled professionals move to the U.S., U.K., or Canada, where they find better pay, more supportive work environments, and greater career opportunities. Many European companies, limited by tighter budgets and inconsistent funding, struggle to offer the stability and growth prospects that top talent seeks. Today only a handful of European media companies have managed to establish a solid, long-term presence in the global market.

ARE WE PREPARED?

Now Europe may be on the brink of a tectonic shift in geopolitics—one that could reshape how we, as citizens, begin to perceive ourselves more as Europeans, rather than solely through our national identities. This shift could profoundly influence the way we engage with visual culture, including film, television, and games. As global power dynamics evolve, the longstanding dominance of American film and media in European markets may start to diminish. If that happens, the key question is: *Are we prepared to fill the cultural space that opens?*

Do we have the infrastructure, creative ambition, and strategic unity to position European stories, values, and voices at the forefront of our own media landscape? This potential turning point calls for serious reflection and bold investment in European production, distribution, and talent development – ensuring that we are not only consumers of global culture, but also confident creators of it.

WHAT EUROPE OFFERS

The distinctive strength of European media production has long been its deep cultural grounding. Rather than viewing films and series merely as marketable content, we have regarded them as cultural expressions – rooted in national and regional values, identities, and human experiences. However, this approach can also be perceived as a limitation, as many European films are seen as being tailored to niche audiences.

As we transition from an artistic tradition to a more content-driven production logic, it is essential that we do not lose sight of the fundamental reasons we tell stories. Our narratives must continue to reflect our unique perspectives and cultural heritage, even as we adapt to global formats and audience expectations. Likewise, as European collaboration becomes increasingly necessary in media production, we must find ways to work together without forgetting the authenticity of our national voices and cultural origins.

And, as technology advances, developing self-awareness and empathetic leadership is becoming increasingly important to balance creativity with digital transformation.

To address these challenges, the individual stakeholders administrating European support need to focus more intentionally on the global market, and not, as today, focus mostly on narrow regional and national cultural and economic development.

UNIFY REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Many regions across Europe – particularly those outside major metropolitan areas – have declared ambitions to become “film cities,” “media hubs,” or “creative regions.” While these missions are promising, they will only lead to substantial and sustainable business development through coordinated, large-scale efforts. To succeed, regions must move beyond isolated initiatives and collaborate to build a critical mass of highly skilled professionals capable of meeting industry demands. This includes developing joint projects, supporting co-productions, collaborating on skill-building, enabling workforce exchange, and aligning local talent pipelines. Together, these efforts can help create attractive conditions for both international and domestic investment. Without more unified strategies, these regional missions risk falling short of their transformative potential.

This also means working across language and cultural barriers to support growth that creates sustainable and competitive environments. This approach can help the industry retain talent by offering competitive salaries, clear career paths, and dynamic, healthy work cultures that attract and keep professionals in the field.

WHAT CAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP DO?

Here, we identify five key areas where political decisions will play a crucial role in shaping future growth and the development of a healthy, attractive and sustainable work environment of the European digital creative industry:

1. **Primary and secondary education policy**, which lays the foundation for visual skills and creativity from an early age.

2. **Higher education policy**, which ensures that advanced training and specialized programs produce strong, resilient artists capable of both defining and meeting industry needs.

3. **Support Policies** which offer essential funding, resources, and incentives to foster innovation and long-term sustainability in the sector.

4. **Market development policy**, including incentives that encourage entrepreneurial thinking and market orientation within the media industry.

5. **Investment policy**, which ensures that Europe remains an attractive region for investment in media and content production.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY, which lays the foundation for visual skills and creativity rom an early age.

Developing imagination, visual skills, and creativity from an early age is essential to prepare all citizens to meet emerging challenges. Imagination and adaptability will be vital in navigating global change. Core competencies from the media industry – such as drawing, design, film language, and color – should be introduced as practice-based tools throughout primary and secondary education, enabling children to express themselves across subjects through the visual language in which they experience the world.

Communication skills and team-based methods should be part of the curriculum in every school.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY, which ensures that advanced training and specialized programs produce strong, resilient artists capable of both defining and meeting industry needs.

Higher education policy is essential to ensure that advanced training and specialized programs produce strong, resilient artists who can both define and meet the needs of the creative industries.

Programs should combine technical excellence with creative exploration and include practice-based learning, collaboration, and exposure to industry tools and workflows. Just as important is the integration of soft skills – such as communication, adaptability, and critical thinking – which are vital for success in complex production environments. Strong policy should also promote close collaboration between institutions and industry, ensuring that graduates are not only employable but capable of shaping the industry's future. This includes co-development projects and innovation labs, performing actual development on projects belonging to specific companies.

These recommendations are now conflicting with the requirements of accredited educational institutions to primarily employ their own permanent academic staff. These rigid and bureaucratic rules limit the ability to engage active industry professionals as teachers, trainers, supervisors and mentors.

In the animation, games, and VFX sectors, such constraints warrant critical examination. They must be challenged, as they risk becoming an obstacle in a field characterized by rapid shifts in both work culture and technological innovation. Increasingly, students and companies express concern that *the content and delivery of their education do not adequately reflect the realities of contemporary professional practice within the industry.*

3. SUPPORT POLICY, which offers essential funding, resources, and incentives to support innovation and long-term sustainability in the sector.

Support policy must here be understood broadly – as the full spectrum of public funding tools and incentives that can stimulate innovation, sustainability, and diversity within the creative sector. These mechanisms should not only provide direct financial support but also foster long-term stability by creating the right conditions for companies and creators to grow.

DEVELOP INTEGRATED FRAMEWORKS FOR CREATIVE GROWTH

Establish coherent public policy frameworks that promote long-term stability across the audiovisual sector. This includes funding initiatives, regulatory clarity, and strategic incentives aligned with innovation and cultural impact.

SUPPORT SMALL STUDIOS AND INDEPENDENT CREATORS

To promote diverse and culturally rich content, policymakers and industry stakeholders should provide targeted micro-grants, subsidies, and access to shared infrastructure such as equipment, studio space, and mentorship. Additionally, collaboration between educational institutions and small companies on development projects should be made more accessible and supported through clear frameworks.

INITIATE STRONGER COLLABORATION BETWEEN SUPPORT SYSTEMS ACROSS EUROPE

Most European regions have legislation in place to support regional and national film and media production – through funding, tax incentives, film commissions, or streamlined procedures. These support systems should be recognized and incentivized for adapting their frameworks to enable greater cross-border collaboration and integration across the European audiovisual sector.

This includes:

- **Streamlining administrative processes and aligning strategic goals**
- **Reducing overly narrow focus on local, national or regional promotion**
- **Encouraging narratives that resonate on a human level to connect with audiences meaningfully.**

The organization Cine-regio that advocates collaborative efforts among regional funds, policymakers, and industry stakeholders points out the following challenges hindering growth of the European audiovisual industry:

- **Fragmented Markets and Limited Cross-Border Circulation,**
- **Dominance of Non-European Productions,**
- **Complex Funding Structures and Bureaucracy,**
- **Underrepresentation and Lack of Diversity,**
- **Insufficient Integration of Digital Technologies**

4. MARKET DEVELOPMENT POLICY, including incentives that encourage entrepreneurial thinking and market orientation within the media industry.

This should include incentives that encourage entrepreneurial thinking and a strong market orientation within the media industry, with particular focus on supporting growth-stage companies capable of developing, distributing, and exploiting original IP on a global scale.

Incentives should also promote the understanding and use of data-driven content development – without losing sight of artistic vision and human-centered intentions.

5. INVESTMENT POLICY, which ensures that Europe remains an attractive region for investment in media and content production.

Europe is a globally respected hub for media and content production, with strong creative traditions, world-class talent, and robust public funding frameworks. However, to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global market dominated by major U.S. and Asian players, Europe must adapt its investment policies to attract more private capital, support scalable production, and simplify cross-border collaboration.

Europe is well-positioned to thrive in the global content economy – but only if it evolves its investment strategies. By aligning policy, funding, and industry needs, European institutions can reinforce a vibrant, diverse, and globally competitive audiovisual ecosystem that attracts sustained and strategic investment.

The following overview outlines the current landscape, key challenges, and strategic recommendations for policy makers at the EU and national levels.

MATURING THE INDUSTRY TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

When it comes to soft skills and work environment, the political level can play a crucial role in guiding companies in the European animation, games and VFX industry toward meaningful improvements.

Here are some key strategies of which some are already in place on both regional, national and transnational levels.

1. INTRODUCE INCENTIVES LINKED TO WORK ENVIRONMENT STANDARDS

- **Tie public funding and subsidies** (e.g., national film funds, EU MEDIA support) to demonstrable workplace policies – such as mental health support, anti-crunch practices, fair contracts, and diversity.
- **Tie tax benefits or grants** to demonstrable workplace policies, for implementing recognized well-being and HR standards (e.g., ISO 45003 on psychological safety).

2. ESTABLISH INDUSTRY GUIDELINES AND CERTIFICATION

- Support the development of a **European Code of Conduct for Work Culture** in animation and VFX.
- Promote **Voluntary Certification Schemes** or **Public Prizes** that recognize studios with outstanding workplace environments – like "Fair Trade" for production practices.

3. FUND TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

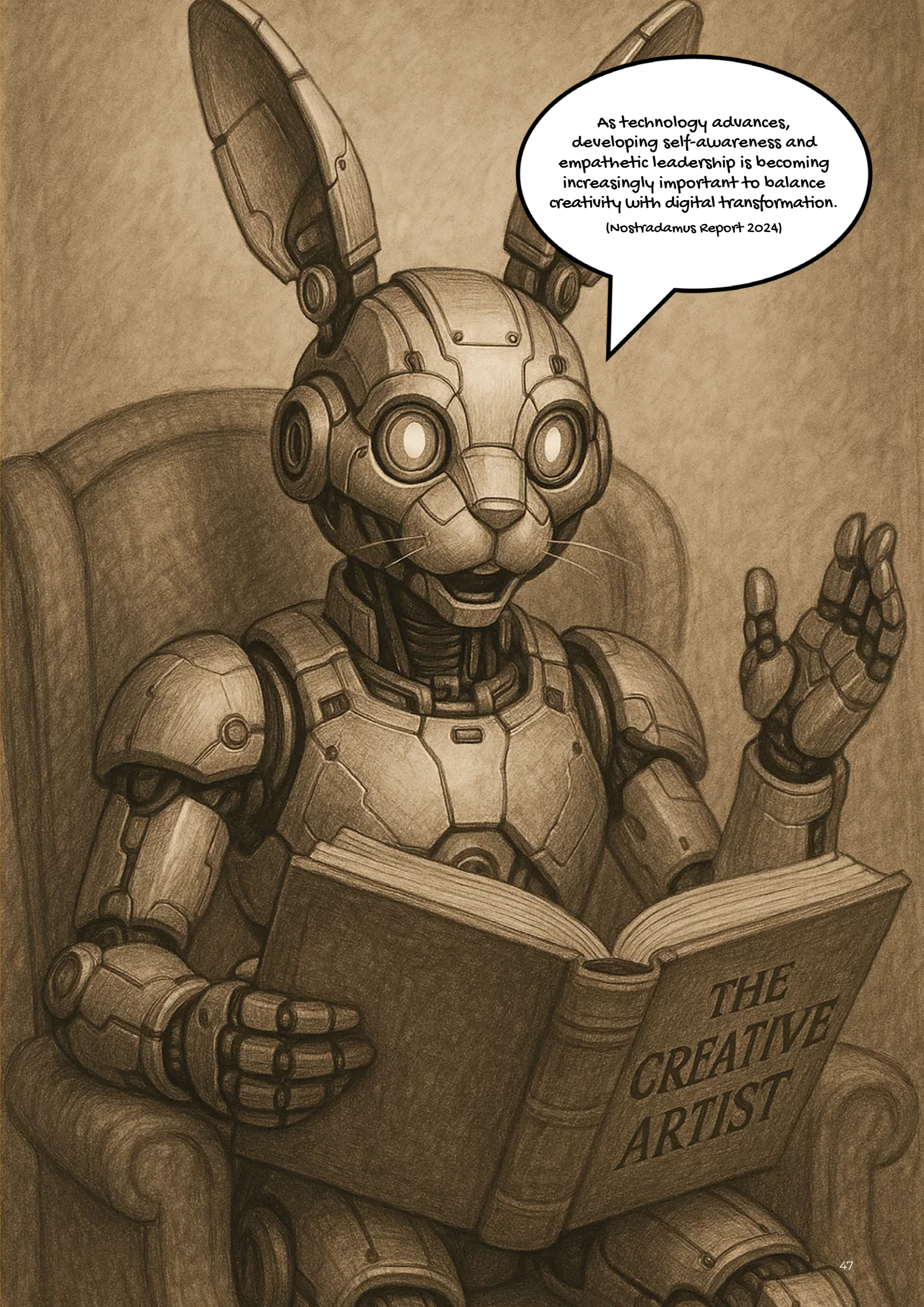
- Allocate EU and national funds for **training programs on leadership, soft skills, and conflict resolution** for studio managers and team leads.
- Encourage **cross-border knowledge sharing** and exchange programs focused on sustainable work culture practices.

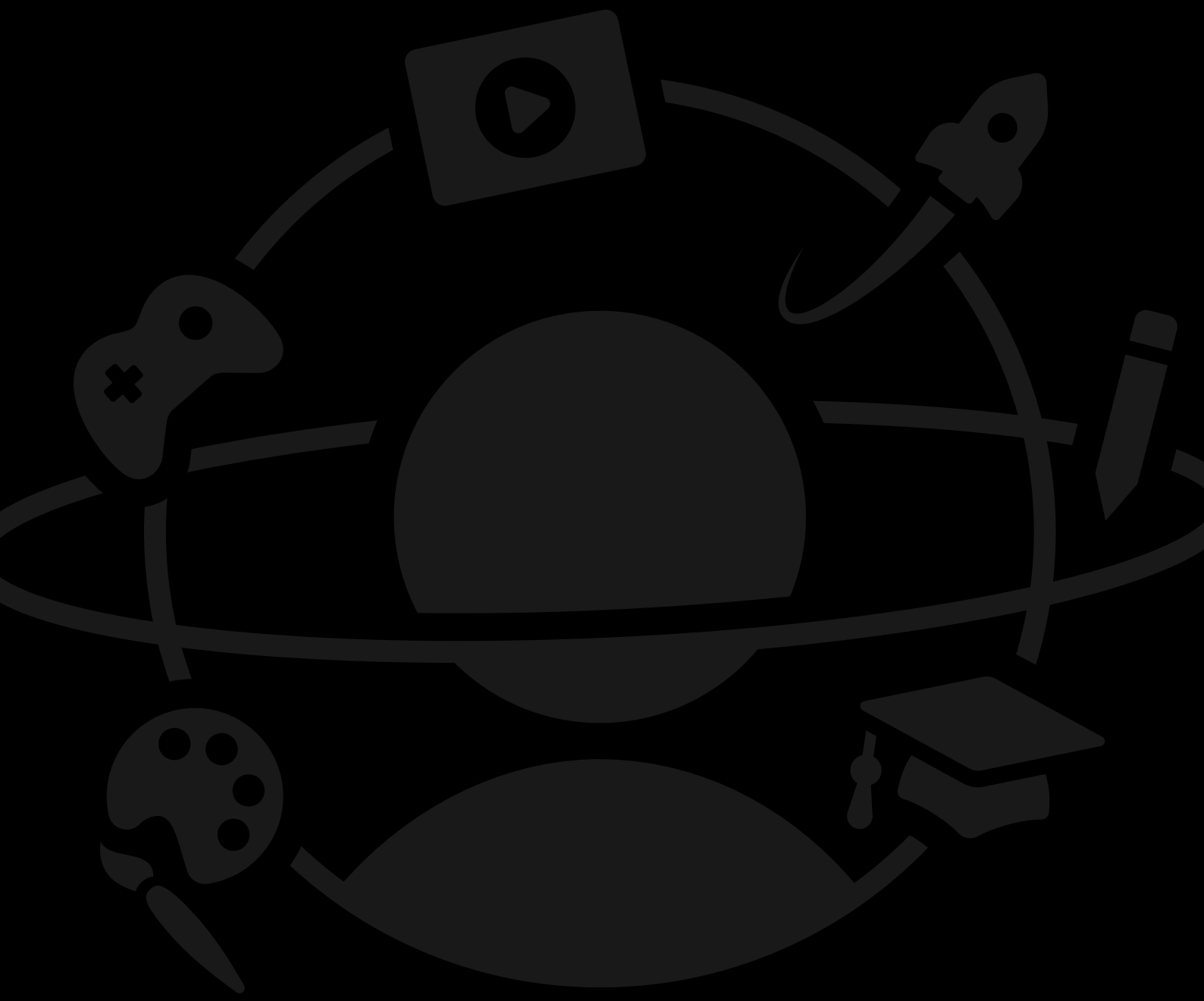
4. REQUIRE TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING

- Introduce **mandatory or incentivized reporting** on workplace policies and well-being metrics as part of public funding evaluations.
- Encourage **anonymous industry surveys** to monitor burnout, inclusion, and satisfaction – informing policy decisions.

5. FOSTER SECTOR DIALOGUE AND RESEARCH

- Fund and facilitate **regular dialogues** between policymakers, unions, industry leaders, and educational institutions to co-develop standards.
- Support **research projects** to keep mapping work dynamics and develop new policy interventions based on data.


As technology advances, developing self-awareness and empathetic leadership is becoming increasingly important to balance creativity with digital transformation.
(Nostradamus Report 2024)
THE CREATIVE ARTIST



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