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Innovating for a Fair Digital Future: How Consumer Behaviour, IP Protection, and Labour Market Change Shape Societal Impact

Cezara-Georgiana RADU[1]*, Oleksandra OLIYNYCHUK[2], Ewa PATRA[2]

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Abstract

Over time, digitalisation has greatly improved the technological environment, but it has also created a series of challenges. Respecting intellectual property rights is especially important nowadays, as it ensures the legal conduct of the business environment. The research highlights that there is a close link between intellectual property rights, consumer behaviour and the labour market. Also, aspects related to digitalisation are researched and how the labour market has improved considerably starting from this, and also how problems such as digital piracy affect both the legal business environment and the perception of consumers. The article is based on the analysis and comparison of data from sources such as Eurostat, the DESI Index, or the EUIPO, but also for a better understanding of what piracy can influence, a Pearson correlation test was carried out in SPSS, using data from the report "Online copyright infringement in the European Union 2017-2023" applied to 27 member countries of the European Union. The results showed that there is a significant correlation for each variable used "TV piracy", "TV platforms", "GDP per capita", and "Internet users". However, the study has certain limitations, because the variables used cannot fully include social, cultural, or economic factors that can influence the analysis performed.

Keywords: digitalisation, intellectual property, consumer behaviour, labour market, counterfeit, creative sectors.

1. Introduction

In the new digital economy, factors such as imagination, creativity, and innovation determine the profile and competitiveness of a company, as well as the uniqueness of its products. Moreover, with the ongoing processes of digitalisation and automation, the functioning of labour markets is undergoing significant

[1] Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania, radu.cezara.georgiana@gmail.com.
* Corresponding author.
[2] University of Applied Sciences in Elbląg, Elbląg, Poland.

transformation. Traditional models of employment are giving way to more flexible forms, which is reflected in their increasingly widespread adoption and the growing development of the gig economy (De Stefano, 2016; McKinney, 2018; Durlauf 2019; Klovig, 2019). This is particularly important in the era of knowledge-based economies, where competitiveness largely depends on the ability to rapidly and effectively implement innovative solutions. Consumers are increasingly drawn to unique and non-standard products that enable the creation and expansion of social networks.

When individuals choose to make certain purchases, they rely on the trust they have in certain products or sellers. Studies show that live shopping is a virtual form of purchasing goods or services, but it is based on the trust projected by influencers or certain marketing campaigns. With technological development, the digital environment has begun to become an area accessed more and more often by individuals (Volkmann & Gavrilescu, 2022). From buying certain products, looking for information or even doing a job online, all these things have become part of people's daily lives. However, the digital environment has also highlighted a number of problems, such as digital piracy or encouraging the purchase of counterfeit products. These aspects have a negative influence first of all on the labour market, because they bring material damage to the other participants in the business environment, but also to consumers, who can end up with a product or service of a lower quality (Zhang & Luo, 2024).

The role of this article is to research the connection between consumer behaviour, intellectual property and the labour market. There is also an emphasis on the digital environment and how many products and services have migrated from the traditional area to the digital environment, having implications on consumer perception, but also on the labour market. At the same time, the research aims to study how the evolution of intellectual property rights impacts the labour market, especially in the creative fields and what are the motivations of consumers when they choose to infringe intellectual property rights in the digital environment.

2. Literature Review

In conceptual terms, intellectual property is inextricably linked to digitalisation, as it is implemented through innovative solutions and technologies, know-how, and inventions. In innovative companies, whose share in the labour market is constantly growing, intellectual property is a valuable asset. Given the multidimensional nature of intellectual property, various objects have a direct or indirect impact on consumer behaviour in the digital environment. This study focuses on such intellectual property objects as trademarks, as well as copyright and related rights, as the digitalisation of many areas of social life closely touches upon the above-mentioned objects.

As an intellectual property object, a trademark faces numerous challenges in the digital age. These include:

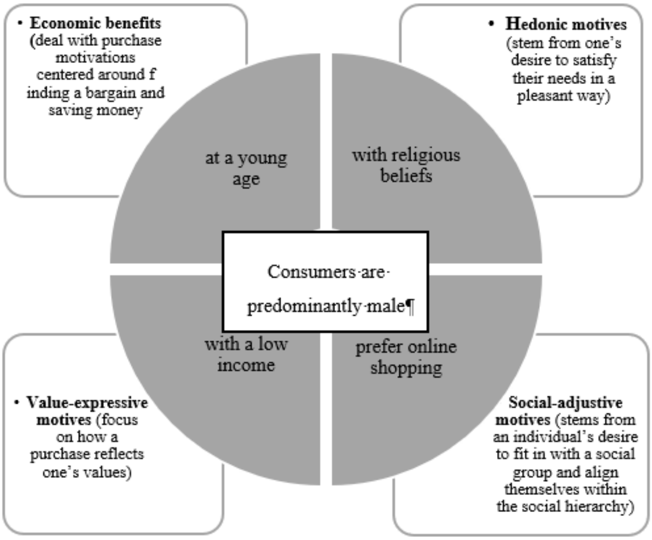
The cybersquatting, which, as noted by Tworkowska-Baraniuk, is the act of registering a new domain with content corresponding to a well-known trader's designation, e.g. in order to increase interest in one's own website or to subsequently resell such a domain (Tworkowska-Baraniuk, 2016). The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) points out that 2023 saw a record number of domain name cases filed with the organisation, with nearly 6,200 complaints handled in 2023, an increase of more than 7% over 2022 and 68% since the start of the COVID pandemic. This number of cases shows that WIPO's Uniform Domain-Name Dispute-Resolution Policy (UDRP) continues to be an important tool for brand owners in the fight against online abuse. Brand owners from around the world filed a record 6192 cases in 2023 under the UDRP and national variations. The United States of America, France, and the United Kingdom filed the most cases. This surge brought the number of WIPO cybersquatting cases to 67,625 since the UDRP's inception, reflecting a clear trend of steady growth over the past 10 years. According to the above statistics UDRP case party location in 2023: Europe – 40%; North America – 33%; Asia – 20%; Africa – 3%; Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) – 3%; Oceania – 2% (WIPO, 2023).

The brand dilution. With the expansion of the digital space, the problem of brand dilution and loss of control over how and by whom the brand is represented is deepening. This causes problems for both brand owners and consumers. As Kevin Lane Keller and Sanjay Sood point out in their article, brand extensions reduce risk for consumers and significantly lower the cost of introductory marketing programmes. This strategy has become the preferred approach for launching new products over the past two decades. However, if the extension strategy fails, the company may face significant financial losses and risk wasting countless man-hours invested in building its brand equity. Consequently, brand extensions can pose a significant risk of brand dilution (Keller & Sood, 2003). InnerView and FocusVision's Brand Dilution Report included a survey of 250 senior executives from medium to large companies, each with annual revenues of at least $250 million. When asked to quantify the impact of brand erosion on their organisation, 24% estimated it at $6-10 million in lost revenue, while more than a quarter (28%) estimated annual losses of at least $10 million. In contrast, the estimated average increase in revenue associated with ongoing, consistent brand representation is 23% (InnerView & FocusVision, 2020). The reasons for this situation are consumer confusion, deterioration of impressions, and loss of trust, which leads to an inevitable decrease in the likelihood of purchase.

The counterfeit and counterfeiting through e-commerce. According to the OECD report, the growing popularity of e-commerce has been exploited by counterfeiters, who are increasingly using e-commerce to sell counterfeit goods to consumers, some of whom purchase the goods believing them to be genuine, while others actively seek out fakes at low prices. The link between e-commerce and the illicit trade in counterfeits is supported by quantitative analysis examining the relationship between online commerce and the number and value of customs seizures of counterfeit goods between 2017 and 2019. The analysis shows that the link is strengthened when the rates of illicit trade in counterfeits using small parcels are taken into account; this indicates that illicit goods purchased through e-commerce are often transported in small parcels, in particular by postal services (OECD/EUIPO, 2021). A joint report by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and the European Commission, published on 13 November 2024, highlights the urgent need for continued action against counterfeiters. The report states that "over 152 million counterfeit articles were detained in 2023, at the EU border and the EU internal market altogether, with an estimated retail value of approximately EUR 3.4 billion. This represents a 77 % increase in terms of counterfeit articles detained (86 million in 2022) and a 68 % increase (EUR 2 billion) in terms of estimated overall value of the counterfeit goods detained in the EU for 2023 compared to 2022. Top categories: games – 45.9%; toys – 8.5%; recorded CDs/DVDs – 7.8%; labels, tag stickers – 6.5%; packaging material – 4.1%; other electronics – 3.5%" (EUIPO, 2024). Although consumers often consciously choose to buy cheaper counterfeits of original branded goods, they still face numerous threats to their health and life, as cheaper counterfeits are mostly of poor quality, produced without compliance with relevant standards, often in unsanitary conditions, and can cause various allergic reactions, irritations, poisoning, and risks to personal safety and the environment. A separate and rather significant problem is the disposal of these types of goods, and the corresponding negative environmental consequences.

When analysing the behaviour of consumers who buy counterfeit goods, it is worth focusing on the motives for such purchases. In this context, the results of a global study based on a survey of consumers from 17 countries (N = 13,053) are particularly noteworthy (Alhabash et al., 2023). The aim of the researchers was to determine the prevalence of counterfeiting behaviour, as well as the motivation for purchases in the past and in the future. Consequently, it was found that the purchase of counterfeit goods is quite common in all countries covered by this study. At the same time, more than half of the respondents confirmed that they were aware of such a choice (deceptive purchases), although only 21% of the sample often bought counterfeits deceptively. More than two-thirds of the sample were deceived into buying counterfeits (deceptive purchases). An interesting finding was that 38% of those who had bought counterfeit products fraudulently still kept them after finding out that they were fake. Overall, about three quarters (74%) of the sample bought counterfeit goods by deception and/or fraud. The most commonly purchased goods were clothing and shoes of counterfeit brands, which consumers used social media (68% via Facebook) and e-retail platforms to purchase. A typical 'portrait' of a consumer of counterfeit goods based on key features and motives is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Typical 'portrait' of a consumer of counterfeit goods



Source: own work based on Alhabash et al. (2023).

To summarise, the purchase of counterfeit goods is a widespread phenomenon and is often a conscious choice of consumers, driven by powerful factors such as economic, hedonic, value-expressive, and social-adjustive motives.

In the digital era, the issue of copyright and related rights also covers a wide range of aspects, including:

The need to adapt the traditional copyright and related rights system to the digital environment. The traditional system is based on the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, usually known as the Berne Convention adopted in 1886, which deals with the protection of works and the rights of their authors (WIPO, 1979). At the same time, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) is actively involved in ongoing international debates on the development of new standards for copyright protection in cyberspace. The organisation administers The WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) (WIPO, 1996) and The WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) (WIPO, 1996) (known together as the "Internet Treaties"), which establish international norms aimed at preventing unauthorised access to and use of creative works on the Internet or other digital networks. The WCT deals with the protection of authors of literary and artistic works, such as written works and computer programs; original databases; musical works; audiovisual works; works of fine art and photographs; while the WPPT deals with the protection of the copyright of performers and producers of phonograms (WIPO, 1996). In addition, Directive (EU) 2019/790 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market (DSM Directive) sets out rules aimed at further harmonising the European Union's legislation applicable to copyright and related rights within the internal market, taking into account, in particular, the digital and cross-border use of protected content (EU, 2019).

This ever-changing global reality makes it increasingly difficult for market actors to remain competitive. It also requires states to create conditions that foster the development of creativity and innovation. This is particularly important for the cultural and creative sectors (CCS). The most common criteria used to define these sectors include: a significant input of human creativity in the production of goods and services; the transmission of symbolic meaning that goes beyond mere utilitarian value and the communication of messages; and the transfer of intellectual property rights in the exchange of goods and services (Zawadzki, 2016). The creative economy most commonly refers to sectors such as culture and the arts, artistic craftsmanship, architecture, design, software development, video games, television, radio, publishing, the music industry, film production, and advertising (European Commission, 2006). Broadly understood design, advertising, film, music, video games, visual arts, architecture, and digital media are among the most innovative and rapidly developing sectors of the modern economy. Their role extends far beyond culture and entertainment, as they also influence a wide range of critical areas within national economies. Their impact is particularly significant in stimulating regional development, improving quality of life, and strengthening sociocultural identity. These sectors contribute to increasing overall life satisfaction among citizens and play an important role in achieving various social objectives, including supporting inclusive policies (OECD, 2022). They also generate a wide range of economic benefits, which are enjoyed not only by those directly involved in these sectors, but also by the broader economy. These effects include the direct and measurable contribution of the creative sectors to the economy, particularly through their impact on GDP, service exports, the sector's added value, and employment levels (OECD, 2023). It is worth emphasising that in the creative sectors where, in addition to the rapid development of new digital technologies, the globalisation of networks, and the deregulation of media driven by new online distribution channels and business models, as well as the growing importance of intellectual property, well-educated and highly skilled workers remain the key resource. Moreover, the creative industries often attract young, educated individuals. Employment in these sectors is highly appealing to them, and this group of workers is characterised by a high level of digital competence, which still varies significantly across European Union member states.

It is also noteworthy that in 2014, the European Commission introduced a tool for monitoring the progress of digital development across EU countries, the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). DESI serves as a key indicator of the digital economy and the digital society. As of now, it monitors 32 indicators across four main areas, including digital skills. Since 2023, DESI has been aligned with the policy programme "Path to the Digital Decade" aimed at achieving key digital targets by 2030 (European Commission, 2021), an indicator used to monitor progress in achieving digital goals (European Commission, 2024). An important assumption for raising the digital skills of EU citizens is that: at least 80% of people aged 16-74 possess at least basic digital skills, at least 20 million ICT specialists are employed within the Union, while simultaneously promoting women's access to this field and increasing the number of graduates in ICT-related disciplines (European Commission, 2021).

Given such disparities in the average level of digital skills, it is important to implement further measures and strategies aimed at increasing digital competence and reducing the digital skills gap. It seems very important to increase the universality of lifelong learning and promoting reskilling and upskilling, as well as recommend pathways for upgrading competences and evolving career paths to adapt to changes in the labour market, whether caused by the impact of artificial intelligence or other factors. With regard to this, it is worth looking at the experience of some countries and the solutions they are introducing. An excellent case in point is Individual Training Accounts in France. Employees accumulate funds from employers in individual accounts, which they can then use for self-selected skills courses. An alternative compelling solution is training leave in Sweden, which allows employees to undertake training on a part- or full-time basis (Święcicki & Witczak, 2023).

When discussing the challenges related to the digitalisation of economies and their impact on labour markets, including the creative sectors, it is worth emphasising that employment within the creative industries is highly diverse. It encompasses both traditional forms of work as well as flexible arrangements, which are becoming the norm in these sectors. These include, for example, part-time work, fixed-term contracts, freelancing, self-employment, and project-based work. Such arrangements make it possible to perform tasks at convenient times, locations, and workloads (Eurofound, 2020; Eurofound, 2024). It should be emphasised, however, that while these forms of work offer greater independence (Roberts & Douglas, 2022), highly valued by employees in the creative industries, they also present challenges such as income insecurity, lack of stability (Allan et al., 2021), and the need for individuals to manage their own careers independently (Wood, 2019).

3. Methodology

This methodology is based both on the analysis and interpretation of data from sources such as Statista, Business of Apps, EUIPO, DESI Index, but also on the creation of correlations between them.

Also, in order to study the impact of the level of TV piracy, the Pearson test for bivariate correlation was performed. The dataset used was extracted from the report "Online copyright infringement in the European Union 2017-2023" and has been used for 27 countries in the European Union. More specifically, the variables chosen were "TV piracy", "TV platforms", "GDP per capita" and "Internet users", with the mention that the last two variables come from a secondary source used in the mentioned report, namely Eurostat. Thus, in order to perform the Pearson test, the data was homogenised in an Excel file, and later the document was used in SPSS. The dependent variable was "TV piracy", while the variables "GDP per capita", "Internet users", and "TV platforms" were used as independent variables. The categorisation of the variables into dependencies and independents was made starting from the fact that the analysis tries to explain what influences TV piracy, and GDP per capita, Internet users and TV platform are variables that may or may not bring an effect to our study.

For the Pearson correlation test, the significance level was less than 0.05, and this analysis was an associative one, not one that was based on a specific cause. The analysis also has certain limitations, such as the fact that the sample being composed of the 27 member countries of the European Union, is a small one, which reduces the applicability of a multiple regression statistical model. At the same time, the correlation with consumer behaviour was not achieved through cultural or social variables, but through the interpretation of labour market results.

4. Results Interpretation

The digital content and new forms of use of creative industry products. This issue covers various aspects of the functioning of streaming platforms, cloud services, and social media, which are new ways of distributing intellectual property works. Table 1 summarises the operational data of the three key players in the creative and digital sectors.

Table 1. Operational data of YouTube, Spotify, and TikTok

Indicators	YouTube	Spotify	TikTok
Monthly active users (MAU) (data on 2025)	2.53 billion monthly active users (MAU); 122 million daily active users (DAU)	675 million monthly active users (MAU)	2.53 billion monthly active users (MAU)
Users by Age (data on 2024)	37.2% of users are between 18 and 34 years old	Largest age group: 25-34 (29%)	Largest age group: 18-24 (30.2%)
Users by Gender (data on 2024)	45.7% female, 54.3% male (no data on other genders)	56% female, 44% male (no data on other genders)	44.3% female, 55.7% male (no data on other genders)
Users by Country	With 491 million YouTube users, India has the highest number of YouTube users worldwide. The United States has 253 million YouTube users, making up the platform's second-highest user base. Other countries with a high YouTube user base are Brazil, Indonesia, and Mexico (data on 2024).	Most Spotify users are from Europe, with almost 182 million users; Latin America is also a major player, contributing 149 million users (22%); North America has 115 million users, accounting for just 17% of the total (data on 2024).	As of February 2025, the United States was the region with the largest TikTok audience by far, with almost 135.79 million users engaging with the popular social video platform. Indonesia followed, with around 107.7 million TikTok users. Brazil came in third, with almost 91.75 million users on TikTok watching short-videos.
Average time users spend daily	48 minutes and 42 seconds (data on 2024)	North America – 140 min, Middle East & Africa – 124 min, Latin America – 117 min, Asia Pacific – 110 min,	Time spent per day: 47 minutes (data on 2024)

Indicators	YouTube	Spotify	TikTok
		Europe – 99 min (data on 2024)	
Revenue	YouTube generated $36.1 billion revenue in 2024, a 14.6% increase year-on-year	Spotify generated €15.6 billion revenue in 2024, a 17.9% increase year-on-year	TikTok generated an estimated $23 billion revenue in 2024, a 42.8% increase year-on-year

Source: Reese (2025), Shaikh (2025), Sheikh (2025), Ceci (2025), Iqbal (2025a), Iqbal (2025b), Iqbal (2025c).

Concerning ensuring the rights of creators, the digital environment is quite favourable for the illegal mass distribution of copyrighted works. The issues of royalties in streaming platforms are becoming more relevant, which, accordingly, leads to fair contractual regulation with such services.

Ensuring the rights of users in the context of inclusion and balanced digital access to educational, scientific and cultural content and protection of authors' rights. This aspect correlates with the issues of digital awareness of the population. For example, according to Eurostat data presented in the publication "Digitalisation in Europe – 2024 edition" on digital skills: "56% of EU citizens had basic or above basic digital skills in 2023". According to the EU target, 80% of all adults should have at least basic digital skills by 2030. To have at least basic overall digital skills, people must know how to do at least 1 activity in each of 5 different competence areas. 44% of EU citizens lack basic digital skills. In 2023, over 90% of people in the EU used the internet at least once a week. However, only 56% had basic or above basic digital skills. Across the EU countries, the share of people with basic or above basic digital skills in 2023 was highest in the Netherlands (83%) and Finland (82%), ahead of Ireland (73%), Denmark (70%), and Czechia (69%)" (Eurostat, 2024). The above data shows a generally low level of digital skills of users, which makes it difficult to make full use of educational, scientific, and cultural digital content.

Protection of related rights of performers, producers of phonograms, and broadcasters in the digital environment. In particular, back in 2008, the Explanatory Memorandum to COM (2008) 464 – Amendment of Directive 2006/116/EC on the term of protection of copyright and related rights noted that phonogram producers face numerous challenges, namely the disappearance of CD markets and insufficient income from online sales that replace them. The latter is due to piracy between users. The EU music recording industry has experienced a decline in record sales: sales of music CDs peaked in 2000 and have been falling at an average rate of 6% since then. Sales of physical albums were projected to decline further, from $12.1bn in 2006 to $10.3bn by 2010. Since 2001, the overall European music recording market has lost 22% of its value (EU Monitor, 2008).

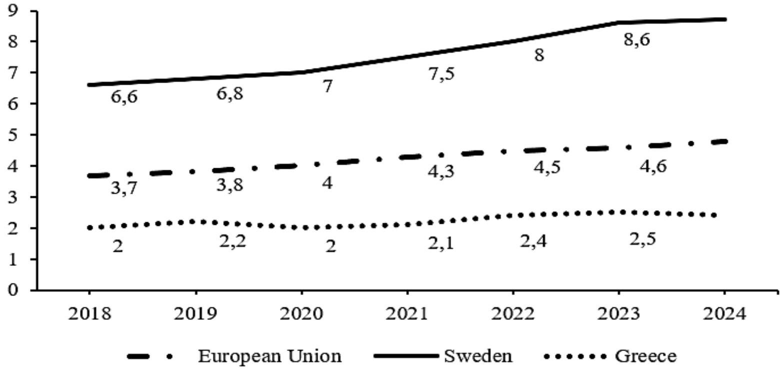
Combating copyright infringement in the digital environment (online piracy, torrenting, illegal streaming) is necessary. It should be noted that, according to the report Online Copyright Infringement in the EU 2023, which examines the consumption of copyright-infringing content in the 27 EU Member States for TV, music, and film during the period 2017-2022, the data show that access to pirated content per internet user per month for all types of content started at approximately 11.5 in 2017, reached a minimum of about 5 in early 2021, and increased to 7 by the end of 2022. Despite this reversal, the number of accesses per user per month in December 2022 was still 40 % lower than in January 2017. Overall, piracy showed an annual decrease until 2021 and a slight growth of 3.3 % in 2022. The underlying change in trend occurred at the end of 2021. The other main findings of the report are:

- piracy behaves differently in each of the areas studied;
- economic and social factors, such as GDP, inequality, and population structure, influence piracy;
- more legal supply reduces piracy in all three areas;
- models show that piracy in film and television (though not music) has declined during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- there is an inverse relationship between the consumption of legal content and piracy in all areas;
- there are significant differences between Member States in terms of access to pirated content (EUIPO, 2023).

Thus, the digitalisation of various spheres of social life creates numerous opportunities for both businesses and consumers. At the same time, it also generates qualitatively new challenges and threats that require flexible responses, strategic adaptation to digital environments, and increased awareness of trends and patterns in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

According to DESI 2024 data based on surveys conducted by Eurostat in 2023, the leaders among EU countries in terms of basic digital skills in the 16-74 age group were the Netherlands - 82.70%, Finland - 81.99%, and Ireland - 72.91%. At the same time, the European average was 55.65%, while the countries with the lowest indicator values were Poland - 44.30%, Bulgaria - 35.52%, and Romania - 27.73%, which means that many employees are simply not ready to implement and effectively use new tools. These factors will inhibit the implementation of solutions based on artificial intelligence, thus postponing potential changes and allowing time for preparation (Korgul et al., 2024). Developing digital skills remains one of the key challenges for these countries in the ongoing digital transformation process. A digitally literate society is crucial for increasing the digital resilience of the workforce and is one of the pillars of the EU's digital policy.

Figure 2. ICT specialists as a share of total employment, DESI



Source: own work based on (European Commission, 2025).

The indicator also facilitates an analysis of the proportion of individuals within the same age cohort possessing above basic digital skills. In 2023, the leading countries in this regard were the Netherlands - 54.53%, Finland - 53.63%, and Ireland - 43.82%. Conversely, the lowest values recorded in the DESI 2024 were observed in Latvia -16.55%, Romania - 8.97%, and Bulgaria -7.73%. The European Union average for this indicator stood at 27.32%, highlighting significant disparities in the level of advanced digital competencies across Member States. Another important dimension measurable through the DESI is the proportion of ICT specialists as a share of total employment. This indicator provides valuable insights into the integration of digital competencies within national labour markets. The highest proportions were recorded in Sweden -8.70%, Luxembourg -8.00%, and Finland -7.60%, indicating a relatively strong presence of digital expertise in their respective workforces. Conversely, the lowest shares of ICT specialists were observed in Slovenia -3.80%, Romania - 2.60%, and Greece -2.40%, highlighting notable disparities in digital labour force development across the European Union. The dynamics of this indicator over the period 2018-2024 for Sweden and Greece are illustrated in Figure 2 (European Commission, 2025).

Table 2. Correlations

		TV Piracy	**GDP per capita**	**Internet Users (%)**	**TV Platforms**
TV Piracy	Pearson Correlation	1	-.448*	-.411*	-.477*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.019	.033	.012
	N	27	27	27	27
GDP per capita	Pearson Correlation	-.448*	1	.865**	.380
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019		.000	.051
	N	27	27	27	27
Internet Users (%)	Pearson Correlation	-.411*	.865**	1	.341
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.000		.082
	N	27	27	27	27

		TV Piracy	**GDP per capita**	**Internet Users (%)**	**TV Platforms**
TV Platforms	Pearson Correlation	-.477*	.380	.341	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.051	.082	
	N	27	27	27	27

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: correlations made by authors with SPSS Software.

As a result of the analysis, it was observed that the dependent variable "TV piracy" is negatively correlated with the other three independent variables used. This can be explained in the light of the fact that each variable contributes to the reduction of digital piracy depending on economic, social, technological factors, and so on.

At the same time, the link between TV piracy and TV platforms is the strongest in the analysis performed, with $r = -0.477$ and $p = 0.012$. This emphasises that a wide range of TV channels and platforms can reduce the level of digital piracy, because if people have more legal options to be able to watch the TV content they want, then the desire to pirate a particular TV program can decrease. Of course, economic factors must also be taken into account, such as, for example, there are individuals whose income is not very high, and they may not be able to afford a premium TV subscription, which includes several TV channels. In the case of this category, research has shown that the chances of resorting to various forms of digital piracy to watch a certain TV channel are high.

On the other hand, in the analysis carried out, it was observed that GDP per capita is also negatively correlated with TV piracy, having $r = -0.448$ and $p = 0.019$. This highlights the fact that developed countries, which have more resources and high financial power, have a lower level of digital piracy.

At the same time, an important aspect is the Internet users, recording the values $r = -0.411$ and $p = 0.033$, which despite appearances, the statistical model highlighted the fact that in countries where there is an increased number of Internet users, the digital piracy is lower. Indeed, this must be adapted according to the context, because as in the case of the income recorded by an individual on the territory of a country, the number of users also depends on other factors such as the level of education, social belonging, or possible economic and social crises. One such situation was the COVID-19 pandemic, which made individuals spend more time at home (Erokhin et al., 2022). As there were not many options to spend that time, many people focused on watching movies and series on TV or on various streaming platforms. Some could afford to pay the price of a Netflix subscription, while others saw their income drop considerably due to the pandemic. This second category was much more likely to watch a movie on various digital piracy sites, than to pay to have access to it. The fact that the labour market was severely affected during the pandemic was directly felt by individuals, who with lower incomes and spending a lot of time in homes had to find illegal ways to access their favourite digital programs and services (Mazzei et al., 2025).

5. Conclusions

In the era of digitalisation, where every company tries to make its presence felt in the online environment, it has been observed that intellectual property rights play a particularly important role both in the labour market, but also in the perception of consumers on certain goods and services.

In summary, it is important to emphasise that investments in education and the development of digital skills are crucial not only for the success of individuals but also for the competitiveness of entire economies, including the creative sectors. According to data from the European Commission and EUIPO reports, the demand for specialists in creative industries is growing. This particularly applies to jobs related to technology, such as UX/UI design, computer animation, digital marketing, and content production for streaming platforms. At the same time, the importance of intellectual property protection is increasing, and the awareness of copyright laws and enforcement tools is becoming a vital part of everyday creative practice. Collaboration between educational institutions, the public and private sectors, as well as the development of accessible support programs, is therefore crucial and can significantly contribute to the further growth of this strategic area of the economy. This is all the more important given the persistent shortage of skilled labour and the digital skills gap across the EU, affecting many industries and various levels of expertise. Digital technologies are now indispensable in numerous areas, including work, education, entertainment, shopping, and accessing all kinds of services, from healthcare provision to cultural offerings. In light of these challenges, it becomes even more essential to pursue a well-thought-out digital policy that will enable citizens and businesses to seize the opportunities offered by a human-centred, sustainable, and more prosperous digital future.

On the other hand, an increasingly common trend in the online environment is related to digital piracy, which involves accessing digital content without purchasing it legally. This happens for various reasons, from cultural, social, to economic factors, since many people have minimal incomes, which do not allow them to purchase a subscription to a streaming company, for example. Another reason could be the biases that have been transmitted over time from generation to generation, emphasising the fact that this is normal to do, this is also related to the level of education in different countries. It has been observed that the most common acts of digital piracy involve music, movies, software or various licenses. The main reason is related to their costs, but at the same time individuals have become accustomed to having quick access to certain goods and services, which leads them to resort to such illegal practices.

In the long run, these aspects can have a negative impact on the labour market, because companies that act on the market legally, record losses and become discouraged in carrying out their activity. For these reasons, a very well drafted and implemented legislative framework is needed at the level of each member country of the European Union, so that there is much better control over these illegal actions.

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