PUIG

# The Creative Potential Gap Report

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# Table of contents

# Methodological Notes

The aim of this report is to provide a comprehensive understanding of creative potential and creativity. From a systemic perspective, creativity is analysed as a cross-cutting capacity present in social, economic and cultural systems, understood not only as an individual attribute, but also as a collective and interdependent phenomenon.

The project is based on three complementary working phases: a systematic bibliographic and conceptual analysis, a series of expert interviews, and a quantitative assessment.

The first phase reviews the historical evolution of the term, from its early association with individual talent, through its later understanding as a capacity present in all people, to its contemporary recognition as a collective, social and relational process. This review allows creativity to be situated in its current context as a driver of transformation and human development, and to identify its historical contribution to economic and cultural progress.

On this theoretical basis, a second qualitative phase was developed, focusing on semi-structured interviews with eight international experts from different fields, including neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, economics, culture or education:

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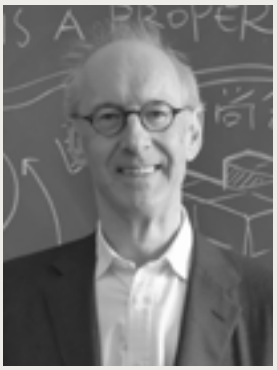

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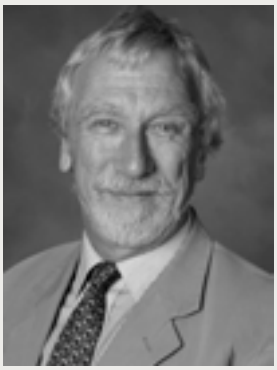

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The conversations addressed four main themes: definitions of creativity; its individual and social transformative potential; enablers and stoppers; and their vision for the future. This interdisciplinary dialogue made it possible to integrate diverse perspectives and reinforce the conceptual interpretation of the creative potential.

In parallel, with the aim of understanding the role of creativity in the economy, in a third phase lead by Oxford Economics, the Creative Economy Index (CEI) was developed, a measure that quantifies creativity at the task level within each professional occupation.

The economic analysis focuses on Europe, where accessible, up-to-date and comparable data sources are available. This geographical delimitation helps ensure greater rigour in the calculations. Nevertheless, the results may be extrapolated to other regions with similar socioeconomic contexts.

The index evaluates more than 17,000 tasks using supervised machine learning techniques, classifying them according to their degree of creativity in high, medium, low or zero. The task-level results were first consolidated into a creativity score for each occupation, weighting tasks by their relevance within the job.

These occupational scores were then aggregated to the sector and country level by considering the share of workers employed in each role. In this way, sectors and countries with a higher concentration of creative-intensive occupations obtain higher overall creativity scores. (For further methodological detail, see Annex 1).

The results were analysed in relation to variables such as job satisfaction, income, investment in education and R&D, and civil liberties.

This index made it possible to identify structural patterns and assess the link between creativity, innovation and social wellbeing and as mentioned above, despite being built on a European evidence base the resulting insights into the key enablers and stoppers of creativity can be meaningfully extrapolated to other regions.

# 1. Executive Summary

This report examines creativity as a multidimensional and systemic capacity, essential for navigating the political, technological and social transformations shaping the twenty-first century. Drawing on a mixed methods design that integrates a historical and conceptual review, qualitative insights from eight international experts, and a quantitative analysis developed by Oxford Economics, the study positions creativity as a pervasive form of human potential rather than a specialised attribute of a few sectors or professions.

The findings reveal that creativity is widely distributed across the economy, embedded in everyday tasks and occupations, and strongly associated with key indicators of social wellbeing such as job satisfaction, earnings, autonomy and civic freedom. The Creative Economy Index (CEI), built upon more than 17,000 task-level assessments, demonstrates that countries with robust educational systems, sustained investment in research and development, high cultural participation and inclusive democratic institutions tend to exhibit stronger creative performance. These enabling forces operate synergistically. Education seeds curiosity and critical thinking; R&D systems translate knowledge into innovation; democratic governance provides the freedom and trust needed for experimentation; and cultural participation nurtures collective imagination.

Conversely, structural constraints such as rigid educational systems, limited workplace autonomy, insufficient investment and constrained civic freedoms act as persistent stoppers that suppress creative expression and hinder its translation into economic and social value. The report also highlights emerging tensions associated with artificial intelligence. While AI can expand human creative capacity by automating routine tasks, uncritical reliance risks homogenising outputs and narrowing divergent thinking.

Overall, the evidence underscores that creativity is not merely a cultural or cognitive resource, but a strategic capability for societal resilience, democratic vitality and long-term economic competitiveness. Unlocking its full potential requires aligning institutional, educational and organisational environments to support autonomy, diversity, participation and psychological safety. By recognising creativity as a common good and by removing the barriers that constrain it, societies can convert uncertainty into opportunity and build more inclusive, innovative and future-oriented pathways for collective development.

# 2. Context

We live in a time of constant challenges. Democracies are under strain, disagreement is on the rise, and the public conversation is filling with noise. Trust is eroding amid polarisation, inequality, and the sense that many are being left out of any share in the future.

At the same time, technological disruption accelerates everything: artificial intelligence, algorithms and automation are reorganising work and time before we have even begun to grasp their consequences. The South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han describes “The Burnout Society” marked by self-exploitation and hyper-productivity, where innovation risks being reduced to an empty, repetitive gesture. Technology promises efficiency, but it does not guarantee meaning. Without a creative compass, AI may multiply what already exists, but it will struggle to illuminate new paths.

Amid these political, social and technological tensions, creativity becomes a civilisational necessity. Hannah Arendt stressed that the human capacity to “begin,” to bring something new into the world, lies at the heart of political action. That act of beginning is, in essence, creativity: imagining alternatives, combining bodies of knowledge, and trying out different responses where others see only blockage or threat.

To speak of creative potential is, therefore, to speak of a reserve for the future: the possibility of transforming polarisation into dialogue, distrust into shared projects, and technology into an ally for expanding rights and opportunities—rather than merely optimising processes. This report arises from the need to understand better how that potential is cultivated, which forces hold it back, and how it can become a real lever for social, democratic and technological transformation.

# 3. The Transformative Power of Creativity

History shows that creativity becomes transformative when it is mobilised collectively, when imagination turns into shared purpose. From artistic movements to technological revolutions, societies have repeatedly harnessed creative energy to rebuild, reimagine and redefine themselves. These moments reveal creativity as a social force, not only the capacity to generate original ideas and forms, but to respond to crisis, foster cohesion and open new paths of development.

Although collective imagination has always shaped human progress, the twentieth century offers a clear example of how it can become a driver of renewal. Confronted with reconstruction after war, the acceleration of technology and the rise of global exchange, communities across the world began to translate imagination into structures of collaboration that reshaped cultural, economic and institutional life.

In post-war Germany, the Bauhaus proposed a radical alliance between art, craft and industry. By fusing creativity with social purpose, it offered a new vision of modern life built on balance between beauty, function and equality. Its influence endured not because of its aesthetic style, but because it redefined creativity as a collective endeavour that could rebuild society from its foundations.

Almost in parallel, and more than half a world away, Japan's Gutai Art Association reclaimed artistic freedom as a form of civic renewal, transforming the trauma of war into an aesthetic of experimentation and play. By asserting the right to create without constraint, Gutai reaffirmed the link between artistic expression and social vitality.

In the years that followed, similar movements emerged that also placed creativity at the core of social transformation. In India, the creation of the National Institute of Design placed creative thinking at the centre of education and development, connecting design to social inclusion and local empowerment.

Decades later, on the earlies 70's, Silicon Valley gave technological form to that same principle. What started as an interaction between universities, laboratories and entrepreneurial curiosity evolved into an ecosystem where experimentation became a social habit. Ideas circulated freely, and collaboration generated tools that would transform communication and daily life. This creative model revealed both the power and the ambivalence of innovation: imagination can connect the world, but it can also concentrate power and reshape economies at enormous scale.

More recently, new forms of collective creativity have emerged as communities experiment with alternative ways of addressing contemporary challenges. Among them, the work initiated at MIT that led to the network of Fab Labs has demonstrated how accessible tools for making and prototyping can foster local problem-solving and shared innovation.

"Creative changemakers stand out because of their mindset; the particular gaze with which they confront challenges and conceive new ways of solving them."

Adama Sanneh

As Adama Sanneh observes in a conversation for this paper, creativity can be understood as “a posture for transformation” , a mindset that enables individuals and communities to reframe problems and generate new possibilities This perspective is deeply connected to his work as co-founder and CEO of the Moleskine Foundation, an organisation that uses creativity as a driver of critical thinking and social transformation among young people. It also resonates with the tradition of Ashoka, a global network that supports social entrepreneurs driving systemic change, where creativity is channelled into projects that unite innovation and social purpose. Here, imagination becomes a civic practice: a method for building more inclusive, participatory and forward-looking societies.

Across these diverse experiences (Bauhaus, Gutai, Silicon Valley, NID, MIT), creativity appears not as an individual act but as a collective response to moments of tension, whether post-war reconstruction, civil-rights struggle, technological disruption or sustainability transition. Rather than simply generating novelty, these movements show creativity operating as a capacity to reorganise social life, to turn uncertainty into shared direction.

At the same time, they remind us that creativity is not a fixed idea. Its meaning shifts with the needs and pressures of each era. Understanding its current potential therefore requires returning to how the concept itself has evolved, moving from a divine or innate gift to an individual faculty, and ultimately to a relational and systemic force embedded in communities and institutions.

# 4. Historical Evolution and Conceptual Reflection

Creativity, as we understand it today, is a modern construct that both reflects and reinforces society's belief in human agency and the capacity to generate ideas that transform reality. Its meaning has never been fixed; rather, it has evolved in response to the changing ways in which people and institutions have understood the act of creating and its role in shaping the world (Glăveanu & Kaufman, 2019)[1].

Tracing this evolution is essential, because it reveals that creativity is not an abstract or timeless quality but a cultural and social construct that adapts to each era's values and contexts. This historical perspective explains how we arrived at today's collective and systemic understanding of creative potential.

1. Glăveanu and Kaufman, in this chapter of the *Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, address the historical evolution of the concept of creativity and the key debates that continue to resonate within contemporary creativity research.

Early civilisations developed sophisticated forms of creative knowledge. Mesopotamian scholars produced some of the earliest advances in mathematics and astronomy, while intellectual traditions in India and China cultivated systems of artistic, scientific and philosophical inquiry that shaped global understandings of invention and imagination.

In creativity's earliest expressions, it was not considered a human faculty but a divine power. Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, creatio ex nihilo was reserved for God, while human beings could only imitate divine creation. A similar view existed in classical antiquity: inspiration was believed to come from the Muses or the gods, situating creativity outside the individual and granting it to a few who could reveal higher truths (Mason, 2003)[2].

In the Middle Ages in Europe, creativity remained tied to the sacred. The Church directed artistic and intellectual production, which was collective and anonymous, dedicated to the glorification of God rather than the affirmation of individual talent. Yet these workshops and guilds also nurtured collaboration and mastery, sowing the seeds of a new appreciation of creative skill that would later emerge during the Renaissance (Glăveanu & Kaufman, 2019).

During this same period, the Islamic world became one of the most dynamic centres of scientific and cultural creativity. Cities such as Baghdad, Córdoba and Damascus advanced mathematics, geography, medicine, architecture and literature, preserving and expanding classical knowledge and reshaping intellectual life far beyond Europe.

2. Mason, in *The Value of Creativity*, examines how creativity became a central value in nineteenth-century Western Europe and why it was linked primarily to the arts, as well as how two contrasting European traditions of the creative faculty shaped debates on genius and informed the modern notion of creativity.

- The Renaissance represented a decisive shift. Creativity became human rather than divine, embodied in the figure of the artist and inventor capable of shaping the world through imagination and technique. Individuals such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were recognised as authors and professionals, symbols of a new belief in personal talent as a transformative force. The invention of the printing press, geographic exploration and the circulation of ideas reinforced this growing association between creativity and human progress.

- The Enlightenment reframed creativity through the lens of reason and discovery, linking it to scientific advancement and the improvement of society. Later, Romanticism rebelled against this rational order, celebrating emotion, originality and intuition. The ideal of the solitary genius took hold, positioning creativity as the expression of exceptional individuals who defied convention. This individualistic view dominated modern culture and continues to influence how creativity is perceived in many domains.

- After the Second World War, the study of creativity entered a new phase. Psychologists began to examine it as a measurable and universal capacity rather than as an innate gift. This shift was part of a broader process of democratisation: creativity came to be seen as an ability inherent in all people, capable of being developed through education and experience. Joy Paul Guilford's pioneering work in the 1950s, and later Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, helped establish the idea that creativity is a fundamental human potential rather than an attribute of a few gifted individuals (Bellini, 2024)[3].

3. Bellini, in the first chapter of *Creative Gesture: Context, Processes, Actors of Creativity*, examines the roots and reasons behind today's renewed interest in the creative faculty, as well as the cultural and psychosocial paradigms through which it has been framed within the human science.

From the 1980s onwards, systemic and relational perspectives gained prominence. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi[4] (1988) described creativity as the result of interaction between individuals, domains of knowledge and social institutions. In the contemporary context, characterised by global connectivity and shared access to knowledge, creativity is increasingly recognised as a relational process. It arises through exchange, participation and co-creation, shaped by cultural and institutional environments. The historical movements discussed earlier, from the Bauhaus to Silicon Valley, from artistic freedom to social innovation, illustrate how each era redefines creativity according to its needs and aspirations, turning imagination into a mechanism for adaptation and renewal.

Creativity has never been a static idea but a reflection of how societies understand their own capacity to act, change and imagine. It has moved from the sphere of the sacred to that of reason, from the celebration of individual talent to the recognition of collective imagination. This long trajectory leads naturally to a different question; no longer about where creativity comes from, but about what allows it to emerge and how it operates in the present.

4. Csikszentmihalyi, in *Motivation and creativity: Toward a synthesis of structural and energistic approaches to cognition*, proposes a unified model of creativity that integrates structural cognitive resources with the motivational forces that drive creative effort, arguing that motivation is indispensable to creative performance and challenging purely rational or problem-solving views of creativity.

With this historical foundation in place, contemporary perspectives shift attention from the exceptional creator to the environments, relationships and motivations that make creative work possible. Instead of treating creativity as a mysterious spark, current approaches understand it as a capacity shaped by context and interactions. An idea becomes creative not simply because it is new, but because it opens a path that was previously unavailable and carries meaning within a particular setting.

The experts consulted for this study reinforce this more situated understanding. Roger Beaty describes creative thinking as moving beyond familiar mental frames; John Howkins highlights the emergence of ideas that feel both new and satisfing; Shahn Majid emphasises the willingness to depart from convention. Others, such as Vlad Glăveanu and David Throsby, stress the relational dimension: creativity unfolds through dialogue, shared meaning and collective engagement. Lastly, Anna Abraham points to the psychological conditions that support it: curiosity, play and the safety required to take risks without fear of failure.

Roger Beaty
"Creativity comes from thinking divergently, from making lots of neurological connections, from curiosity and openness to new experiences."

John Howkins
"Something is creative when is new and satisfying, it satisfies someone's desire to solve a problem."

Shahn Majid
"To be truly creative it is not enough to have lots of ideas, but you need to have a passion and the strength to overcome dogmas that you might face."

Vlad Gaveanu
"Creativity comes in different forms and shapes but what is common is that it gives birth to meaningful novelties."

David Throsby
"Creativity starts as an innate characteristic but not reserved for a few, but much more widespread than we think."

Anna Abraham
"Creativity is about engaging, is a skill that you have to keep working on, it needs to be developed."

Emily Akuno
"Creativity is to see the possible in the apparently imposible, to challenge the status quo."

Adama Sanneh
"Creativity is an attitude, a posture, a way to look at the world providing novel and sometimes unconventional fresh approaches."

Across these perspectives, a common insight emerges. Creativity is a capacity that grows through practice, exposure and the right enabling conditions. It flourishes when diverse forms of knowledge meet, when people feel empowered to question and combine, and when their environments protect the freedom to explore.

This broader view also clarifies creativity's significance beyond the development of solutions. It expands the horizon of what societies consider possible and contributes to meaning-making, not only efficiency. As Adama Sanneh observes, its transformative force lies in its ability to reshape how we conceive the future, helping communities reframe problems and imagine alternatives.

Building on these insights, this report adopts a clear and operational working definition: creativity is the capacity to find innovative and purposeful solutions across different domains of human activity. This definition does not aim to capture every philosophical or cultural dimension of creativity, but it provides a coherent basis for analysing its economic, social, cultural and democratic implications. In a moment defined by uncertainty and rapid change, understanding creativity in this way positions it not only as a driver of innovation but as a form of agency, a means through which individuals and communities can imagine and begin to build new futures.

# 5. The Presence and Potential of Creativity Across the Economy

Having outlined the conceptual evolution of creativity and identify the limitations that continue to shape its definition — as evidenced by insights from the expert interviews — the following section presents the results of the quantitative analysis performed by Oxford Economics, to measure creativity´s role within the economy, quantifying creative potential and its variation between countries.

## 5.1 Creativity is Present Across the Entire Economy

Creativity is both a cause and a consequence of societal growth and development. As an economy increases its productivity and competitiveness, it naturally gives rise to more complex products and services—those that require a greater combination of knowledge and, consequently, creativity.

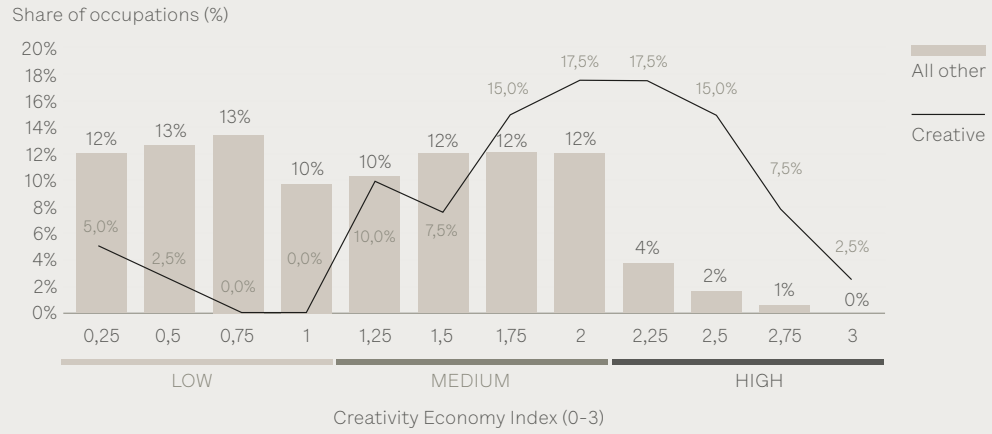
It is therefore no surprise that creativity has become a latent and cross-cutting force within the contemporary economy.

As shown by the Creative Economy Index developed by Oxford Economics—which measures the level of creativity inherent in the tasks required to perform a job—creative work is no longer confined to the traditional creative industries or artistic professions[5]. While it is true that the share of occupations involving highly creative tasks is greater within creative industries, evidence shows that roles across a wide range of sectors also demand at least a basic level of creativity (see Figure 1).

Specifically, almost half of all jobs (47%) include at least one highly creative task, and eight out of ten (80%) involve tasks requiring a medium level of creativity—demonstrating that creativity is part of everyday work across a wide range of activities and occupations.

### Creativity Everywhere

Figure 1. Average creativity levels in traditional and non-traditional occupations




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

5. The term 'creative industries' encompasses a diverse set of businesses, workers, and freelancers operating across multiple economic sectors. However, when referring specifically to the 'traditionally crea tive industries'—as defined in the Oxford Economics report Developing Economic Insight into the Creative Industries: Report for Creative UK (2021)—the focus is placed on predominantly cultural products and services, including: advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design and designer fashion; radio, and photography; IT, software, and computer services; museums, galleries, and libraries; and music, performing, and visual art.

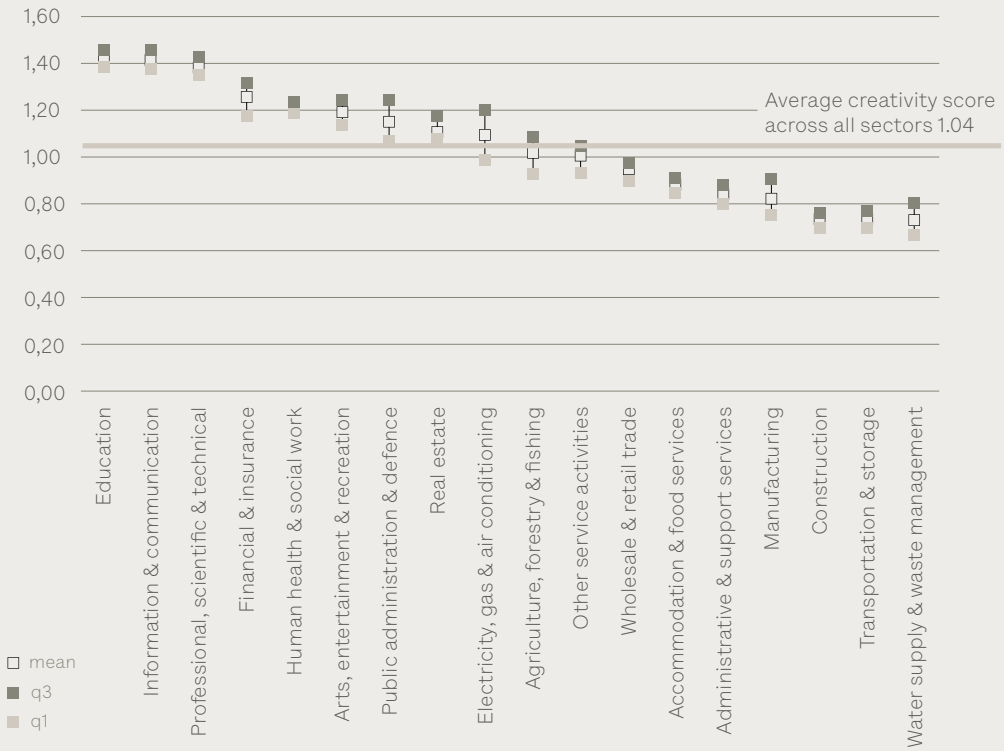
## 5.2 Creativity Is Unevenly Distributed Across Sectors and Countries

On the other hand, although aggregating creativity scores by sector reveals significant differences between industries (see Figure 2), it is equally important to note the interquartile differences (represented in Figure 2 by the gap between the beige and grey dots) reflect differences in these sector scores across countries. These interquartile differences illustrate how, within the same sector, there coexist occupations that require tasks with varying levels of creative intensity meaning sectors in some countries have higher scores, where more creative occupations are represented to a greater degree.

For instance, sectors such as electricity, gas and air conditioning supply, public administration and defence, agriculture, or manufacturing can display very different creativity scores depending on the specific occupations performed within them.

Uneven Sectors

Figure 2. Sectoral distribution of creativity scores




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

This has important implications when analysing results aggregated by country, as a nation's level of creativity depends on the extent to which its different productive sectors have succeeded in developing occupations that involve a higher number of inherently creative tasks.

Accordingly, the conclusions presented in Figure 3 are consistent with analyses discussed later in this report—such as the correlation between creativity and R&D investment (Figures 8 and 9)—which highlight how such investment acts as a driver for developing the most creative occupations within each country's sectors.

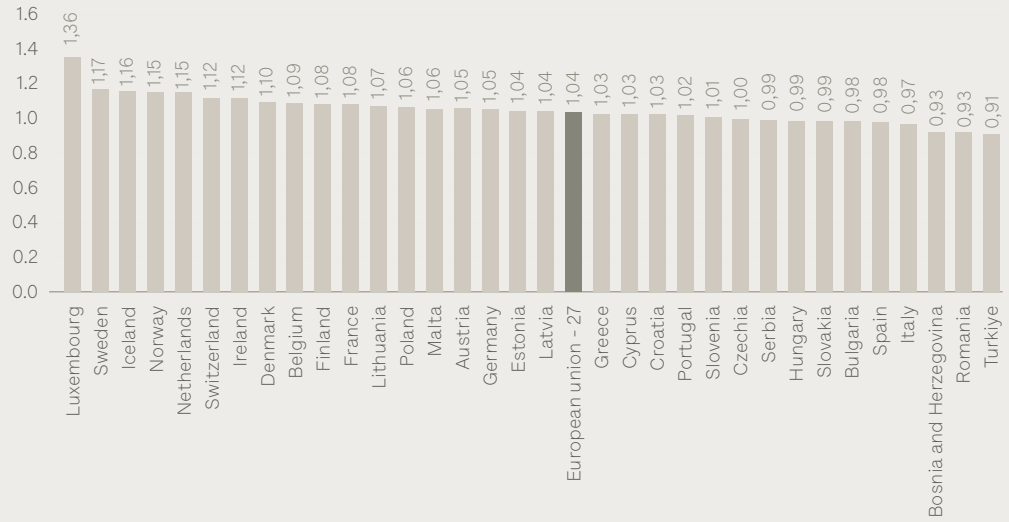
In other words, a nation's overall level of creativity is not determined solely by its dominant industries but can be fostered through the development of occupations that entail more creative tasks.

It should also be noted that the study faces one limitation: the possibility that a given task may be performed with varying degrees of creativity. Due to data constraints, it is not possible to model the extent to which individuals actually incorporate creativity into the execution of their tasks.

The result is that the creativity is not evenly distributed across Europe, but rather reflects the economic, institutional and educational structures of each country.

Nordic Advantage

Figure 3. Creativity scores by country




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Note: The figure shows creativity scores for 33 countries that reported to Eurostat in 2024 — EU-27, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey, plus the EU-27 average, with the exception of United Kingdom, which is not represented as their latest available creativity score dates from 2019.

Luxembourg, Sweden, Iceland, Norway and Netherlands, achieve the highest scores in the Creative Economy Index. These economies stand out for their concentration of highly skilled, knowledge-intensive sectors and for work environments that foster autonomy, collaboration and innovation.

This performance is largely driven by the weight of finance and insurance, public administration and support services, education, health and social services, and professional, scientific and technical activities. All sectors that require highly specialised professionals with extensive educational and professional training. In these areas, the link between human capital, qualification and creative output becomes particularly visible.

Below the average are the Eastern European countries — Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania— as well as the Southern European economies.

# 6. Forces that Unlock Creative Potential

Creativity does not translate spontaneously into the labour market; it depends on structural, institutional, cultural, and labour-market conditions that can either foster or limit it. Drawing on the correlations established by Oxford Economics between countries' scores in the index and a range of social, institutional and economic indicators, it becomes possible to identify the factors that enable or hinder the realisation of creative potential.[6]

Beyond production structures and labour-market dynamics, the development of creativity is shaped by a set of interconnected enabling forces — education, investment in research and development (R&D), freedom, and cultural participation — which configure the environments in which creative potential can be translated into economic and social value.

These dimensions operate in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way: education seeds creative competences; R&D converts knowledge into innovation; freedom provides space for experimentation and diversity of ideas; and cultural participation enriches the collective imagination while strengthening social cohesion. Added to these are workplace autonomy and wellbeing, which allow creativity to flourish at the organisational level, enhancing satisfaction, productivity, and job quality. When these factors are aligned, creativity becomes a genuine driver of development, generating more innovative, inclusive, and resilient ecosystem.

6. This study adopts a correlational rather than causal approach. While consistent relationships are observed across the variables analysed, these associations should not be interpreted as evidence of direct causality, as other underlying factors may also contribute to the patterns identified.

## 6.1 Cultural Participation as a propensity proxy for Creativity

Cultural participation can be understood as an indicator of the interest individuals show in activities with a strong creative component, and therefore as a useful proxy for assessing the extent to which people are willing to incorporate creativity into their lives.

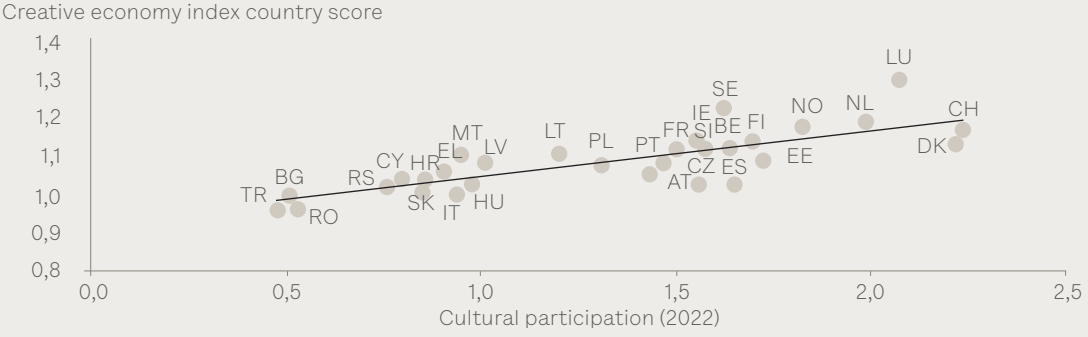
As highlighted in the Special Eurobarometer 562 – Europeans' Attitudes toward Culture (2025), when people's interest in culture does not fully translate into active participation in cultural activities, it is often due to factors such as lack of time, financial constraints, or limited access to information about available cultural offerings, among others.

Culture provides a space for collective encounter, learning and experimentation that broadens the imagination, strengthens social bonds and helps foster creative potential. Shahn Majid points out that engaging with culture, even through activities such as reading, expands the mind's ability to connect ideas and question assumptions , which is the basis of creative thinking. Similarly, Anna Abraham highlights that curiosity and exposure to new experiences stimulate imagination and problem-solving, while David Throsby points out that cultural participation not only enriches the individual experience, but also 'fosters social cohesion and shared creative expression,' creating an environment conducive to the development of talent and innovation.

Cultural participation, defined as the average number of times an adult has attended a cultural activity during the last year (such as going to the cinema, attending a live show — theatre, concert, etc. — or visiting a cultural site such as a museum, gallery or historical monument), is a key factor in developing this creative potential. The data show a positive correlation between the degree of cultural participation and scores on the Creative Economy Index (see Figure 4).

Culture Meets Creativity

Figure 4. Cultural participation and creativity scores




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Note: The figure reports the correlation between cultural participation and creativity scores for 31 countries that reported to Eurostat in 2022 — EU27, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey.—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, and the United Kingdom, do not appear as they did not submit updated cultural participation data to Eurostat.

> “Community activities, art related or not create spaces where people can express themselves and where the creative ideas will come through. And these spaces contribute to greater social wellbeing and cohesion as well.”
>
> David Throsby

Adopting a broader perspective, countries where the population actively participates in cultural activities tend to reach higher levels of economic creativity.

Accordingly, reducing the barriers of access to cultural activities and promoting more inclusive, equitable and sustained cultural participation represents a strategic opportunity to activate collective creativity and strengthen the connection between cultural life, innovation and economic development. As Throsby suggests, participation in cultural life is ‘a key mechanism for social cohesion and collective imagination,’ while Glăveanu reminds us that creativity grows through interaction and the exchange of meanings within communities. Taken together, these perspectives reaffirm that societies that value openness, diversity and access to culture create the most fertile environments for creativity to flourish.

## 6.2 Education as Seed of Creative Potential

If there is one indicator capable of measuring a country's creative potential, the closest might be the Creative Thinking Score from the OECD's PISA report. Since this indicator captures creative thinking abilities at early stages of life, it can be considered relatively independent from the potential effects of public policies or labour market dynamics.

As expected, when comparing the PISA Creative Thinking results with those of the Creativity Economy Index, we find a strong correlation. However, it is also insightful to look at the cases where countries' results deviate most from what the correlational analysis predicts (represented by the line in Figure 5).

The red-shaded area represents countries that have not yet managed to fully translate their creative potential into creative occupations, while the green-shaded area shows those that have succeeded in obtaining a higher-than-expected creative return within their labour markets.

Consistent with previous findings, countries such as the Netherlands and Iceland stand out for having been particularly effective in channelling their creative potential into the workforce.

One of the key factors likely enabling this translation of creative potential into the labor market is investment in education. As illustrated in Figure 6, although there is a positive correlation between education spending and the Creativity Economy Index, countries with higher levels of educational investment tend to score above what the model would predict (the green-shaded area).

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"If people (teachers) spent a bit of time explaining how much we don't know about the wonder of the universe, children would be curious about it."

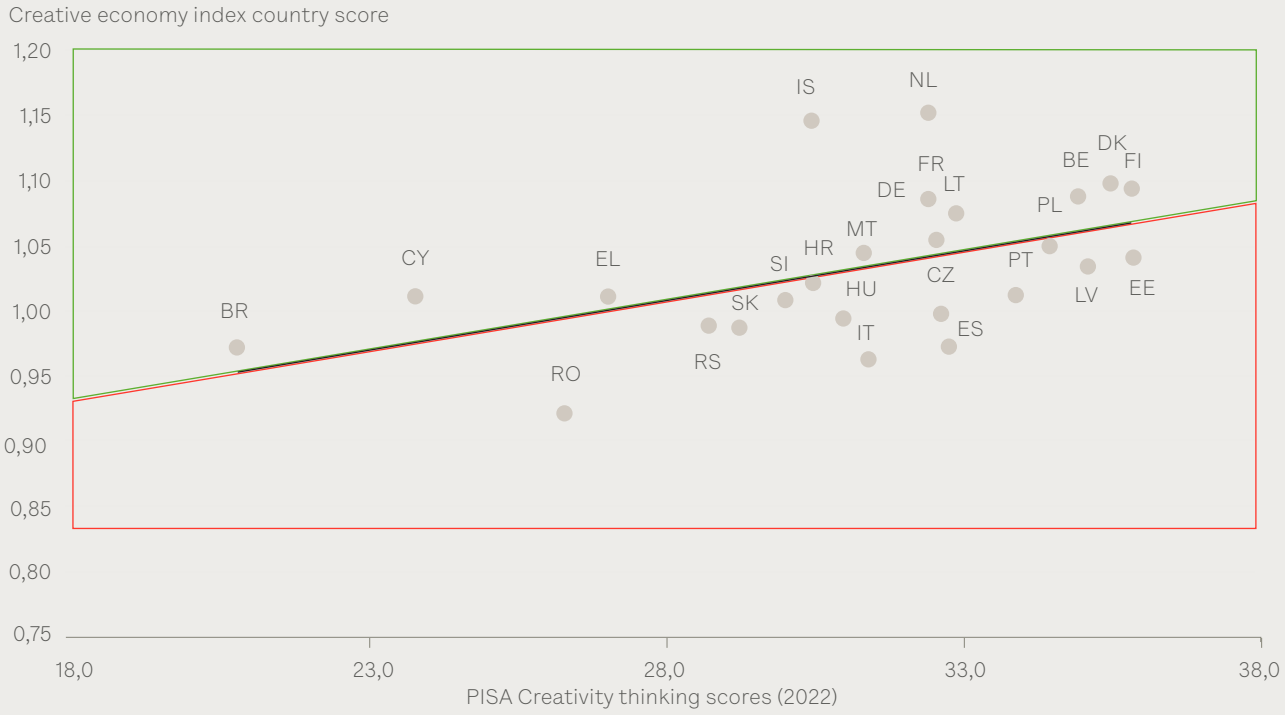
Shahn Majid

This is because education forms the very foundation upon which society is built. It shapes individuals' capacity to think critically, it empowers people to imagine, question and create. As Shahn Majid points, schools play a vital role in planting the seed of curiosity — encouraging children to recognise how much remains unknown. 'If people (teachers) spent a bit of time explaining how much we don't know about the wonder of the universe, children would be curious about it.'

A society that invests in education is one that believes in human potential and in the transformative power of knowledge. Public expenditure on education[7] acts as a catalyst for creative potential. Countries that allocate a higher percentage of their GDP to education tend to achieve better results in the Creative Economy Index.

From Classroom to Workplace

Figure 5. Correlation between PISA creative thinking scores and the Creative Economy Index



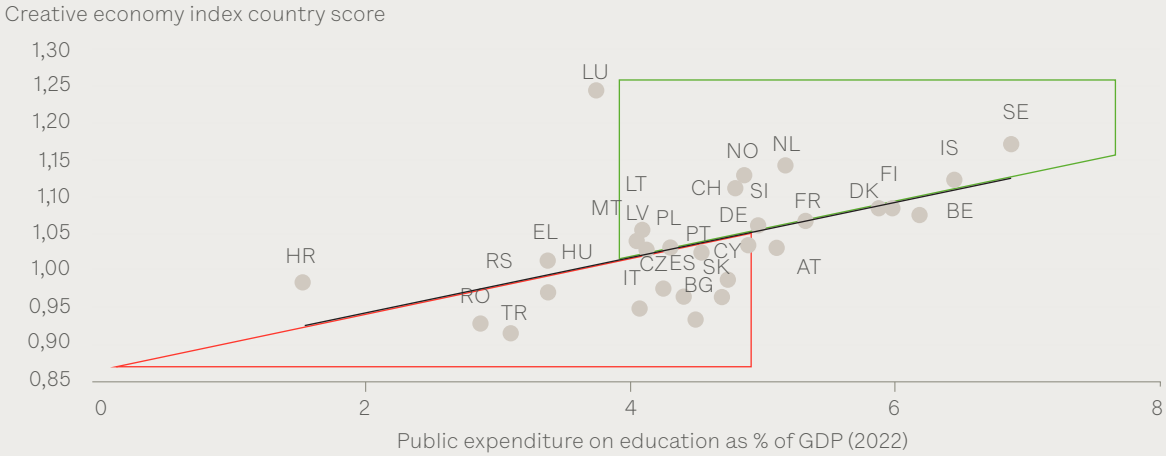

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Note: The figure reports the correlation between PISA creative thinking scores (2022) and the Creative Economy Index for 25 countries. EU27 except Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden. Contrarily, Iceland and Serbia, and other countries that are not part of the EU such as Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Norway, and the United Kingdom are excluded, as the OECD did not report PISA creative thinking results for these countries.

7. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP is measured using data from Eurostat (2022).

## Expanding Education

Figure 6. Public expenditure on education and creativity scores




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Note: The figure reports the correlation between public expenditure on education (Eurostat, 2022) and creativity scores for 30 countries — EU27 except Estonia and Ireland. Non-EU countries also included are Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Serbia, and Turkey. Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United Kingdom did not submit updated public expenditure on education data to Eurostat therefore are not included in the figure.

However, as John Howkins observes, the expansion of education alone does not guarantee the effective development of creative potential. What truly matters is the nature of the educational contexts in which people learn and grow. Creativity flourishes in environments that nurture autonomy, curiosity, and the freedom to explore ideas, rather than in rigid systems focused solely on standardisation and instruction. Learning contexts that encourage questioning, experimentation, and intellectual risk-taking are better equipped to sustain creativity over time, whereas those that prioritise conformity or purely instrumental learning tend to inhibit it.

Howkins also highlights the importance of connecting schools and universities with broader innovation ecosystems through flexible pathways, entrepreneurial learning, and opportunities to apply creative competences in real settings, ensuring that the creativity cultivated in education effectively flows into the economy and society. In this sense, the effectiveness of education depends not only on investment levels or academic performance, but also on its capacity to model and legitimise creative behaviour as a lifelong competence.

Similarly, psychologist Vlad Glăveanu notes that creativity cannot simply be ‘taught’ as a fixed subject or switched on and off at will; rather, it is modelled through example. When teachers act creatively—by taking risks, showing intellectual humility, and embracing uncertainty—they do more than transmit knowledge: they foster in students the attitudes and mindsets that sustain creativity over time. Roger Beaty from a neuroscience perspective, adds how intervention programmes that foster divergent thinking, encourage curiosity, openness to experience and ultimately strengthen neurological networks are key to promote creativity.

Fostering creativity, therefore, requires educational systems that value reflection, curiosity, and experimentation as integral components of the learning process, enabling individuals to apply creative thinking beyond the classroom.

Taken together, these insights confirm that education is the seed of creative potential. Countries that combine sustained investment in their education systems with pedagogical models that actively encourage creative mindsets achieve the highest levels of creative performance. Conversely, where a gap persists between education, innovation, and the labour market, creative potential remains latent and fails to translate into productivity and growth.

Ultimately, the creative potential of an economy depends not only on its most creativity-intensive sectors, but on its capacity to activate and harness creative thinking across all occupational levels. Where creativity is recognised, nurtured and integrated into work dynamics, its impact on innovation, added value and social wellbeing is multiplied. Its pervasive presence throughout the economy and society demonstrates that its development depends less on the nature of professions and more on the environments that stimulate, recognise and promote it.

## 6.3 Public and Private R&D: Complementary Pillars of the Creative Ecosystem

Investment, in its broadest sense, is an expression of what societies choose to value. It goes beyond financial allocation to reflect a shared belief in the power of progress. Deciding what to invest in, is deciding what kind of future we want to build.

Within this broader vision, creativity stands as one of the most undervalued yet transformative forces. Emily Akuno reminds us that we talk about creativity a lot, but we don't always create systems that recognise or reward it, calling for structures that make creative contribution visible and valued. While some forms of creativity such as the arts are visibly rewarded, others, like scientific or intellectual innovation, often go unrecognised or even discouraged. Systems that fail to reward creative risk-taking risk stifling the very novelty they seek to promote. Recognising and rewarding creativity, in all its forms, is essential to sustaining innovation and collective progress.

From this perspective, investment in research and development (R&D) becomes a clear indicator of a society's capacity to foster creativity and innovation. Countries that allocate a larger share of their public expenditure to R&D and dedicate a greater share of private GDP to R&D tend to develop new, more complex, tasks that contribute to higher scores in the Creative Economy Index, confirming the enabling role of creativity as both an economic driver and a catalyst for transformation (see Figures 7 and 8).

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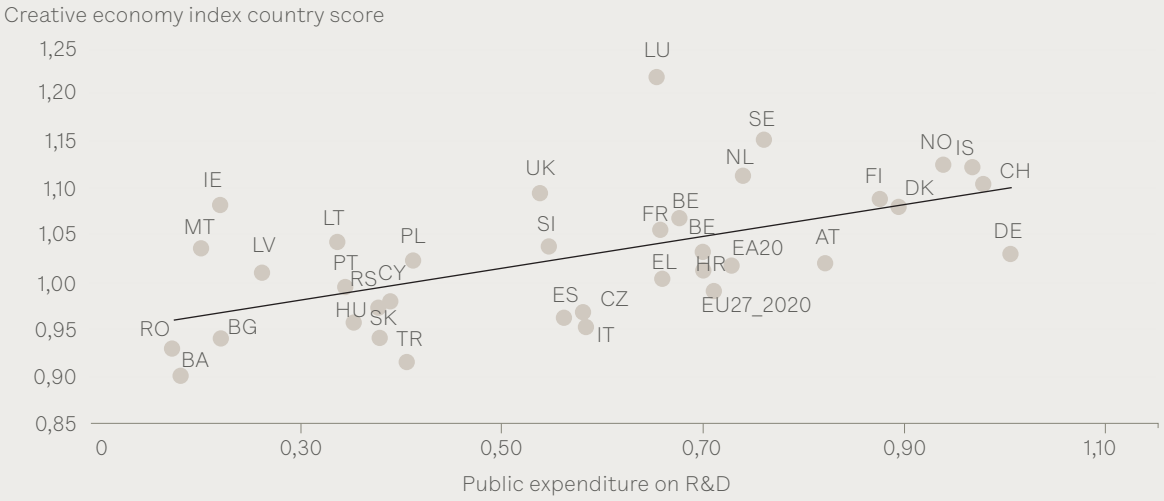
"We talk about creativity a lot, but we don't always create systems that recognise or reward it."

Emily Akuno

## Public Investment for Ideas

Figure 7. Public expenditure on R&D and creativity scores

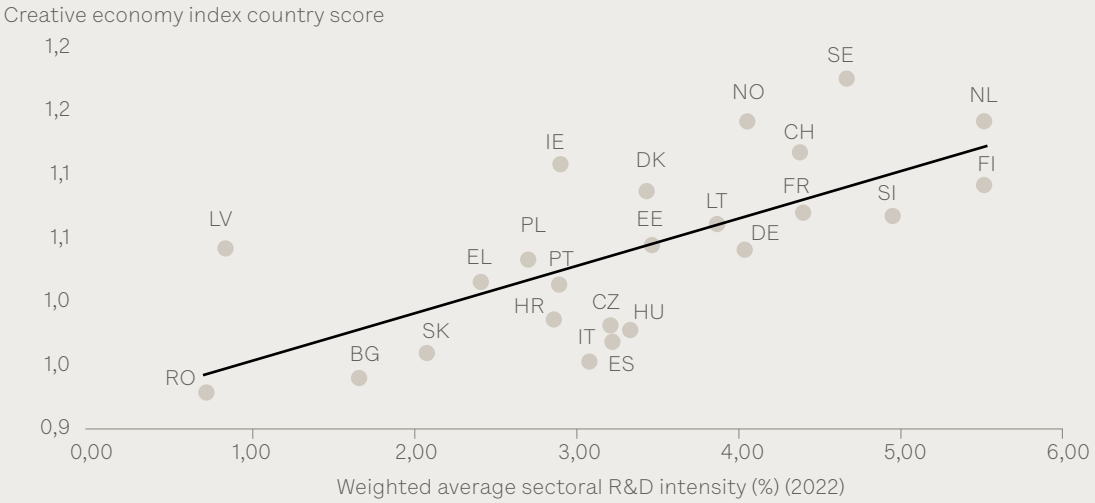



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Note: The figure reports the correlation between public expenditure on R&D and creativity scores (Eurostat, 2024) for 34 countries — EU27, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom.

## Private Investment for Ideas

Figure 8. Private sector R&D intensity and creative scores




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Note: The figure reports the correlation between the sectoral average ratio of R&D expenditure to gross value added (private sector R&D intensity) and creativity score (Eurostat, 2022) for 24 countries- EU27 except Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Luxemburg and Malta. Non-EU countries included are Switzerland and Norway. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Serbia and the United Kingdom, do not appear as they did not submit updated private sector investment in R&D data to Eurostat.

Overall, the evidence suggests that public R&D investment does establish the structural conditions necessary for it to flourish. Countries that combine investment in knowledge with policies integrating science, innovation and employment are those that successfully transform creative potential into a genuine competitive advantage.

Taken together, the results highlight that private R&D investment is an essential enabler of creative potential. While public R&D creates the structural conditions for creativity to emerge, private R&D converts that potential into tangible outcomes, driving innovation, competitiveness and economic growth.

## 6.4 Freedom and Governance: Institutional Conditions of Creative Potential

Just as individuals cannot reach self-actualisation without first meeting their basic needs, societies cannot unlock their creative potential without solid institutional foundations. Drawing from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, political freedom, civil rights, and freedom of expression represent the collective equivalent of safety and security, the conditions that allow people to think freely, take risks, and imagine alternatives. These foundations not only enable creative expression but also build the pathways for social mobility, allowing individuals to improve their life prospects through the exercise of their creative capacities.

Environments that cultivate openness, curiosity and trust, values closely aligned with democratic culture, create the relational and psychological conditions for creativity to thrive. These qualities foster a sense of safety and belonging that enables individuals to take risks, challenge assumptions and experiment with new ideas. As Glăveanu suggests, promoting creativity requires not only political freedom but also a cultural ethos that legitimises diversity, dissent and experimentation.

---

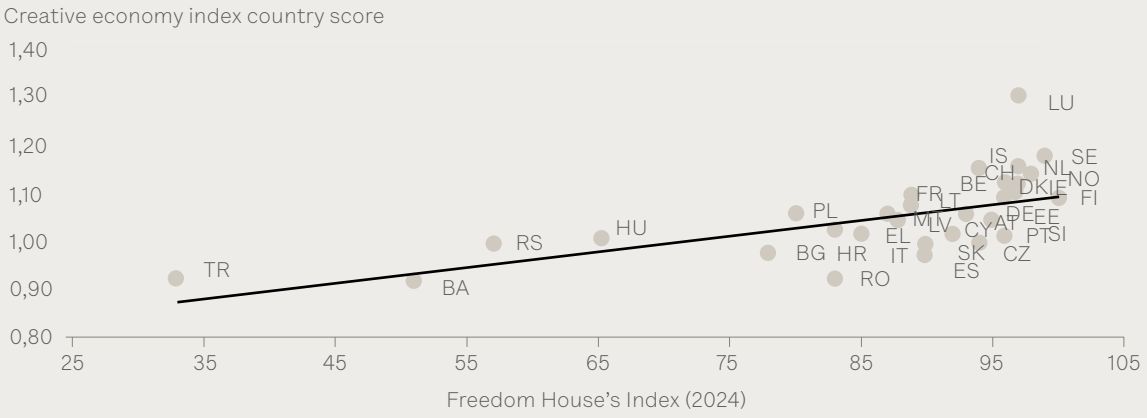
"Collective creativity can be very powerful, creativity expands our horizon of possibility. But this can never happen in autoritarian regimes, we need openness, curiosity, humour..."

Vlad Glăveanu

Empirical evidence confirms this connection. Countries with higher levels of political freedom, civil rights and freedom[8] of thought and expression consistently record higher levels of creativity, demonstrating that democratic openness and institutional strength create more favourable environments for the development of creative potential. According to the Freedom Index (2024) show a positive correlation between levels of political and civil freedom and scores in the Creative Economy Index (see Figure 9).

Freedom and Creativity

Figure 9. Freedom Index vs Creative Economy Index




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Note: The figure reports the correlation between freedom index and creativity scores (Freedom house data & index, 2024) for 33 countries- EU27, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey.

The results show that in countries where freedom extends beyond the political sphere, it translates into social trust and cultural openness—factors that expand the space for both individual and collective creativity.

Taken together, the results confirm that freedom is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the development of creative potential. Open and democratic societies foster autonomy, diversity and critical thinking, generating institutional environments conducive to creativity, innovation and economic growth. In line with Acemoglu and Robinson's (2012)[9] framework, inclusive political and economic institutions strengthen these dynamics by protecting property rights, promoting equal opportunities and preventing the concentration of power. Such systems not only enable individuals to take risks and innovate, but also ensure that new ideas can emerge, circulate and transform societies.

8. Political freedom and civil rights are measured using data from Freedom House data (2024).

9. Acemoglu and Robinson, in *Why Nations Fail*, argue that democratic political systems with inclusive institutions — often linked to capitalist economies based on private property — foster the development of creative capacity.

However, as psychologist Vlad Glăveanu notes, the relationship between freedom and creativity extends beyond institutions and into the cultural and relational fabric of societies. Creativity is shaped by the norms and values that govern how freedom is lived, expressed and shared. In hierarchical or conformity-driven contexts — even where democratic rights are formally guaranteed — creative expression can be stifled by social expectations, fear of failure or rigid authority structures. Democracy is not enough to support creativity, public policies that sustain it are key to develop the environment for creativity to unlock its potential.

This view aligns with Anna Abraham's argument that psychological safety and possibility thinking are essential to sustain creativity, since individuals can only take risks and challenge assumptions when they feel free to do so. Similarly, Shahn Majid underlines that transformative creativity depends on the courage to resist orthodoxy and to question prevailing dogmas, a process that requires not only intellectual freedom but also cultural legitimacy.

Democracy does more than safeguard civil liberties: it provides the cultural and emotional infrastructure for creative potential to unfold. Where freedom of expression, social trust and inclusivity coexist, creativity becomes both a personal capacity and a collective force for transformation.

## 6.5 Workplaces that Unleash Creative Potential

Beyond democratic openness and public investment in education and research, fostering creativity requires the sustained development of ecosystems that nurture it throughout life. As John Howkins points out, 'creativity peaks around the age of three or four, the raw creativity, the instinct built in every baby and young child'. While creativity flourishes naturally in childhood, it tends to decline as social norms and institutional structures impose conformity and reduce opportunities for exploration (Sukel, 2023)[10]. Anna Abraham argues that both education systems and workplaces must cultivate playfulness, curiosity, and freedom to question, as these conditions 'unlock the internal perspective of creativity' and transform potential into tangible innovation. Experts interviewed for this study consistently highlight the need to strengthen such ecosystems across education, culture, and work.

In adulthood, the workplace becomes one of the main environments where creativity can either be constrained or expanded. Organisational cultures that promote autonomy, trust, and a sense of purpose recreate the same psychological safety that enables creative exploration in early life. When individuals feel empowered to make decisions, take risks, and experiment, they are more likely to innovate and contribute meaningfully to collective goals.

> "We need to think about how we facilitate people to generate those new ideas. Business can engourage its employees to think more creatively, to let them almost behave like children."
>
> David Throsby

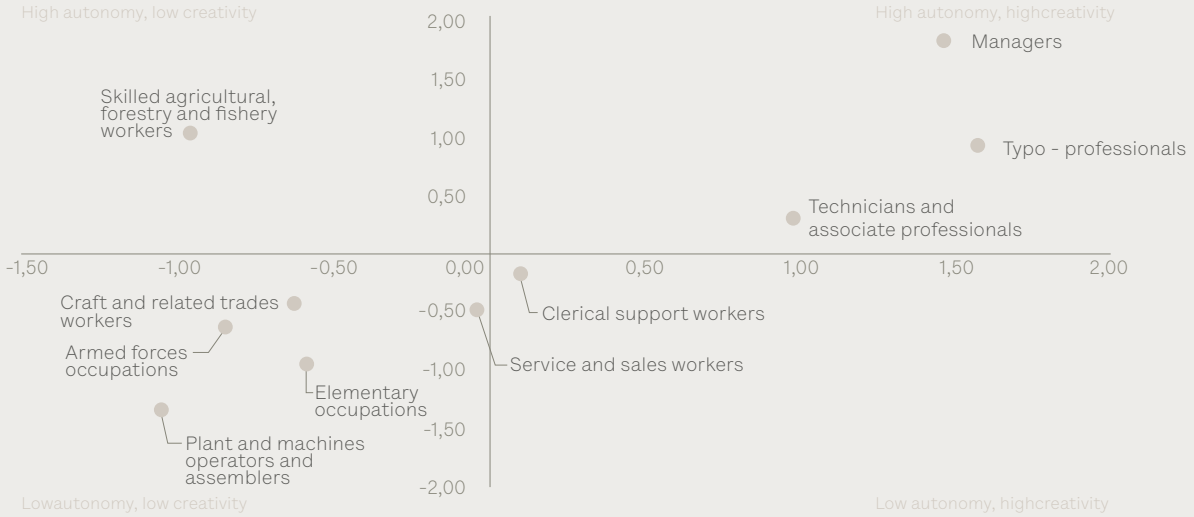
10. A 1968 NASA-commissioned study found that 98% of children displayed "creative genius" levels at age five, but this declined sharply through schooling. The Creativity Economy Index by country has been calculated for 34.

In this context, managers and professionals occupy the high-autonomy, high-creativity quadrant (see Figure 10). These positions combine leadership, decision-making and responsibility, and represent the occupational groups most intensive in creative thinking. Technicians and associate professionals are situated at an intermediate level.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, service workers, sales staff, administrative support and manufacturing employees are concentrated in the low-autonomy, low-creativity quadrant, reflecting more hierarchical and routine professions with limited opportunities to develop creative potential. The case of skilled agricultural workers is atypical: their activity shows low levels of creativity, indicating that autonomy does not necessarily translate into innovation or creative problem-solving when tasks lack inherent creative value.

Responsibility and Autonomy for Creativity

Figure 10. Creativity vs. Job autonomy

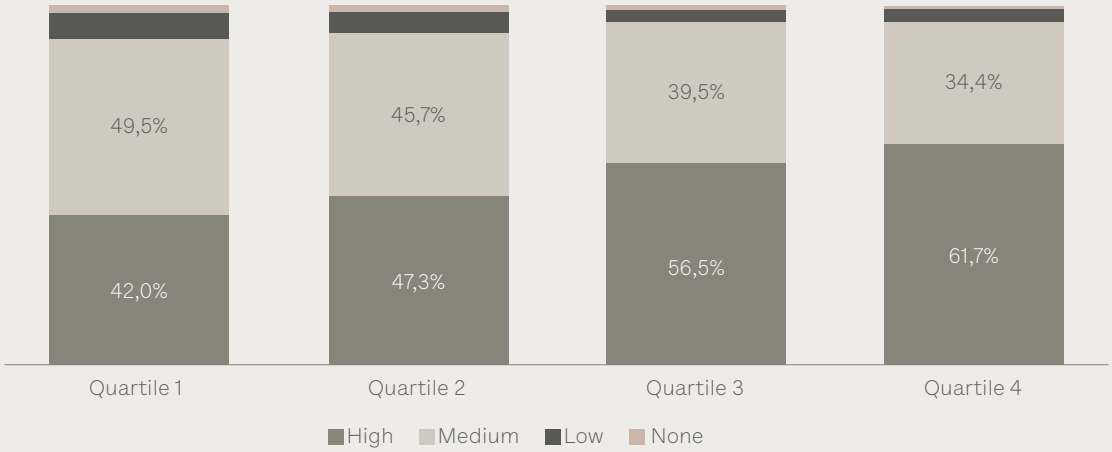



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Likewise, occupations with higher levels of creativity and workplace autonomy also report greater levels of personal job satisfaction (see Ficure11). Individuals working in highly creative occupations show significantly higher satisfaction rates. This confirms that creativity and autonomy contribute not only to productivity and innovation, but also to wellbeing and personal fulfilment at work.

## Satisfaction in the Workplace

Figure 11. Job satisfaction by occupational creativity quartiles

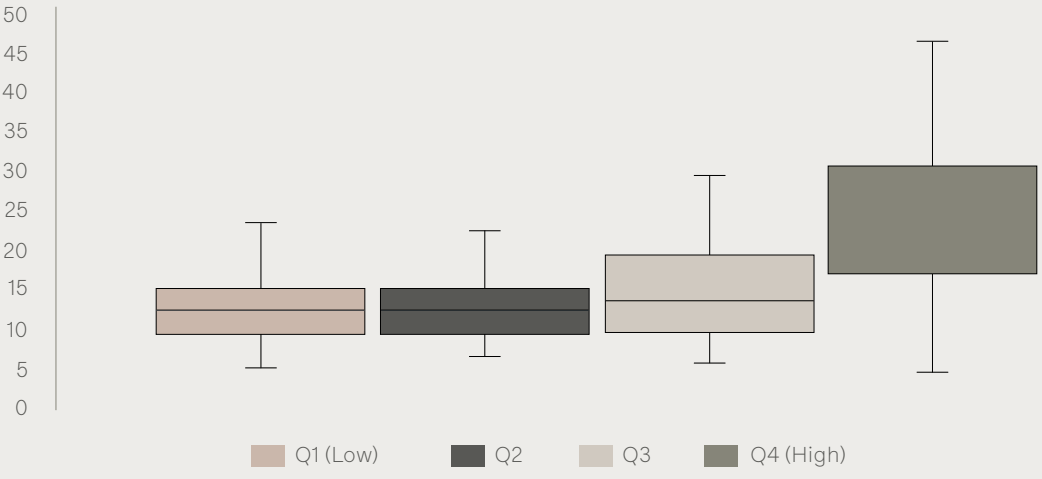



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

Moreover, people working in more creative occupations not only feel more fulfilled but also earn higher incomes (see Figure 12). Workers positioned in the top creativity quartile earn an average of €24 per hour (adjusted for purchasing power), compared with €14 in the third quartile and €13 in the two lower quartiles.

## Wages Across Roles

Figure 12. Earnings by occupational creative quartile (€. PPP-adjusted)




Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Oxford Economics

In today's rapidly evolving labour landscape, it is relevant to mention the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the workplace and how it adds a new layer of complexity to the relationship between autonomy and creativity. When used strategically, AI can automate routine or repetitive tasks, freeing time and cognitive resources for workers to focus on higher-value, creative activities. In this sense, technology can act as a catalyst for innovation, enabling individuals to explore, design, and problem-solve more effectively.

However, excessive reliance on AI systems may also constrain creativity by promoting standardisation and homogenising outputs (C. Lai, et al, 2024). When ideation becomes overly dependent AI recommendations, the individual diversity of ideas and originality can be diminished. The challenge lies in integrating AI as an enabler of creative autonomy rather than as a substitute for it — ensuring that technology amplifies, rather than replaces, the distinctive capacities that drive human creativity.

Ultimately, the relationship between creativity, autonomy, and wellbeing extends beyond individual fulfilment. The most competitive and resilient organisations will be those capable of balancing innovation and inclusion, technology and human expression. Promoting work environments where creativity can develop freely requires simultaneous investment in innovation, wellbeing, and sustainable growth, but also a renewed commitment to placing human potential at the centre of progress.

# 7. Looking Ahead: Towards a Shared Agenda for Creative Potential

Creativity has become one of the essential capacities of our time. In an era marked by uncertainty, technological acceleration and profound social change, it stands out as a human and civic capability; a shared skill that enables people to participate meaningfully in society to co-create alternative solutions for collective challenges. As the analysis in this report shows, creativity extends far beyond artistic expression, it is a universal potential embedded across the entire economy and a resource that societies must deliberately cultivate if they hope to navigate the future with resilience and renewed social cohesion.

Fully activating this potential requires what can be understood as the democratisation of creativity. The conviction that creativity is a spark we all carry and everyone should be able to ignite it. Creativity should not be a privilege tied to wealth, geography or circumstance but a common good that allows people to imagine, participate and shape their own futures.

Yet significant barriers persist. Social and economic inequalities restrict access to cultural participation; rigid educational systems often fail to nurture imagination, confidence and self-expression; many workplaces remain governed by structures that limit autonomy; and where fear of error continues to suppress experimentation. These barriers do not only stifle creativity, but they also constrain opportunities, reinforce privilege and prevent societies from benefiting from the full range of human potential. Addressing them demands deliberate institutional choices such as investing in education, safeguarding artistic freedom, expanding social mobility pathways, and cultivating environments built on trust, psychological safety and meaningful participation.

## Navigating a new frontier: technology in service of human creativity

Artificial intelligence introduces a new frontier to the conversation. Used thoughtfully, AI can expand human capacities; it accelerates idea generation, widens access to knowledge and enables forms of experimentation that were previously impossible. Yet, if used passively or uncritically, it may reinforce existing constraints by homogenising ideas, narrowing divergent thinking or reducing opportunities for human exploration. Recognising this duality opens up space for future developments to explore how emerging technologies can support, rather than inhibit, the creative potential highlighted here.

For private actors, this implies an active responsibility: to invest in digital literacy, ethical frameworks and experimentation spaces where technology augments, rather than replaces, human capacity to imagine, experiment and create.

## Education and work as critical spaces

Moving from aspiration to reality, societies must focus on the two spaces where creative capacities take root and are exercised every day: education and work.

Reimagining education means understanding it as the foundational engine for creative capability, and therefore strengthening its role in nurturing curiosity, confidence and imagination from an early age, while bridging the persistent gap between the creative skills cultivated in classrooms and their application in society. Schools, universities and cultural institutions must work together to design learning environments that foster exploration, critical thinking and creative agency.

Workplaces, in turn, must evolve into ecosystems that recognise and reward creative contribution. Organisations that foster autonomy, collaboration, inclusion and meaningful purpose are not only more innovative, but also contribute to social mobility by enabling people to strengthen skills, build confidence and expand their horizons. For companies, this involves more than rhetoric; it requires structures that support mentoring, continuous learning, and equitable access to opportunities within and beyond the organisation. Creativity becomes, in this sense, an engine of both competitiveness and collective advancement.

From the perspective of private actors and their alliances, this can translate into concrete lines of action such as:

- Strengthening awareness and education: partnering with schools, universities and cultural organisations to promote creative skills, career guidance and role models that broaden young people's aspirations.
- Expanding opportunities for mobility and equity: opening pathways that prioritise underrepresented groups and reduce structural barriers to participation.
- Supporting cultural participation, artistic experimentation and programmes that help people see themselves as creative agents.
- Backing innovation for collective problem solving. Promote collaborative projects that connect employees, communities, entrepreneurs and researchers to codesign solutions to shared challenges.

Many of these initiatives reach their full potential when they are designed and implemented with public institutions and civil society, aligning corporate strategies with broader social priorities.

## Enabling environments: culture, institutions and multi-stakeholder dialogue

Looking ahead, advancing creativity as a pathway for social progress requires a shared effort across institutions. Public bodies have a key role in sustaining the cultural infrastructures that ensure access, visibility and expression for diverse communities. Culture, in this sense, becomes a powerful lever of equity: it shapes who feels able to imagine, participate and contribute. Communities, in turn, reinforce or challenge these norms, making creativity a collective space where belonging and possibility are negotiated.

To unlock this potential, multi-stakeholder spaces for dialogue and collaboration are essential.

Such spaces can also guide the design of public–private partnerships that strengthen cultural ecosystems, expand equitable access to opportunities and ensure that technological innovation remains anchored in human values.

## Keeping the conversation open

This report is a first step toward recognising creativity as a strategic resource for contemporary societies. It does not seek to close the debate, but to open it: to encourage further analysis, collective learning and institutional action. Creativity resists simplification and measurement, yet understanding it, and removing the barriers that constrain it, is essential if we are to enable it to flourish.

Acknowledging its complexity is, perhaps, the first creative act and an invitation for institutions, businesses, communities and individuals to continue this conversation together, and to translate it into concrete commitments that expand the creative potential of all.

Workplaces, in turn, must evolve into spaces that recognise and reward creative contribution. Organisational cultures built on autonomy, collaboration and meaningful purpose are not only more innovative, but also more sustainable and fulfilling. As several experts emphasise, creativity is often celebrated rhetorically yet rarely supported structurally; transforming this requires acknowledging creativity as a fundamental component of wellbeing and competitiveness.

This report is a first step toward recognising creativity as a strategic resource for contemporary societies. It does not seek to close the debate, but to open it: to encourage further analysis, collective learning and institutional action. Creativity resists simplification and measurement, yet understanding it, and removing the barriers that constrain it, is essential if we are to enable it to flourish. Acknowledging its complexity is, perhaps, the first creative act.

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# 9. Annex 1: Methodological Appendix

This annex provides additional clarification on the methodological decisions underlying the report and identifies areas where further detail would be useful for interpretation. Its purpose is to enhance transparency, anticipate reader questions, and make explicit the assumptions and limitations of the overall design.

The report combines bibliographic and conceptual analysis, expert interviews, and quantitative modelling. This mixed-methods strategy was selected to capture creativity as a multidimensional phenomenon—individual, social, cultural, and economic.

The selection of literature and experts was guided by the intention to construct a broad and multidimensional view of creativity. The project sought authors and perspectives that had examined creativity in depth but from markedly different angles, allowing the review to reflect the plurality inherent to the concept. This same rationale informed the qualitative phase: experts were chosen because their backgrounds offered complementary ways of understanding creativity. From cognitive and psychological approaches to methodological and process-oriented perspectives, to artistic, social and scientific viewpoints. To structure this diversity, the experts, listed in the figure 13, were grouped into four broad domains: neuroscience and psychology, creative process and alternative methodologies, arts and social impact, and pure science. This categorisation ensured that the conceptual framing was informed by perspectives that capture creativity as at once cognitive, cultural, methodological and scientific.

Figure 13. List of experts interviewed.

| Number | Name | Position |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Adama Sanneh | Co-founder and CEO of Moleskine foundation |
| 2 | Roger Beaty | Assistant Professor at Penn State University |
| 3 | Emily Akuno | Professor of Music at the Technical University of Kenya |
| 4 | Shahn Majid | Mathematician and Professor at Queen Mary University of London |
| 5 | Anna Abraham | Neuroscientist and Professor at the University of Georgia |
| 6 | John Howkings | Analyst and Author on Creative Economy |
| 7 | David Throsby | Specialist in the economics of art and culture, and Emeritus Professor in the Department of Economics at Macquarie University (Australia). |
| 8 | Vlad Glaveanu | Professor of Psychology at Dublin City University |

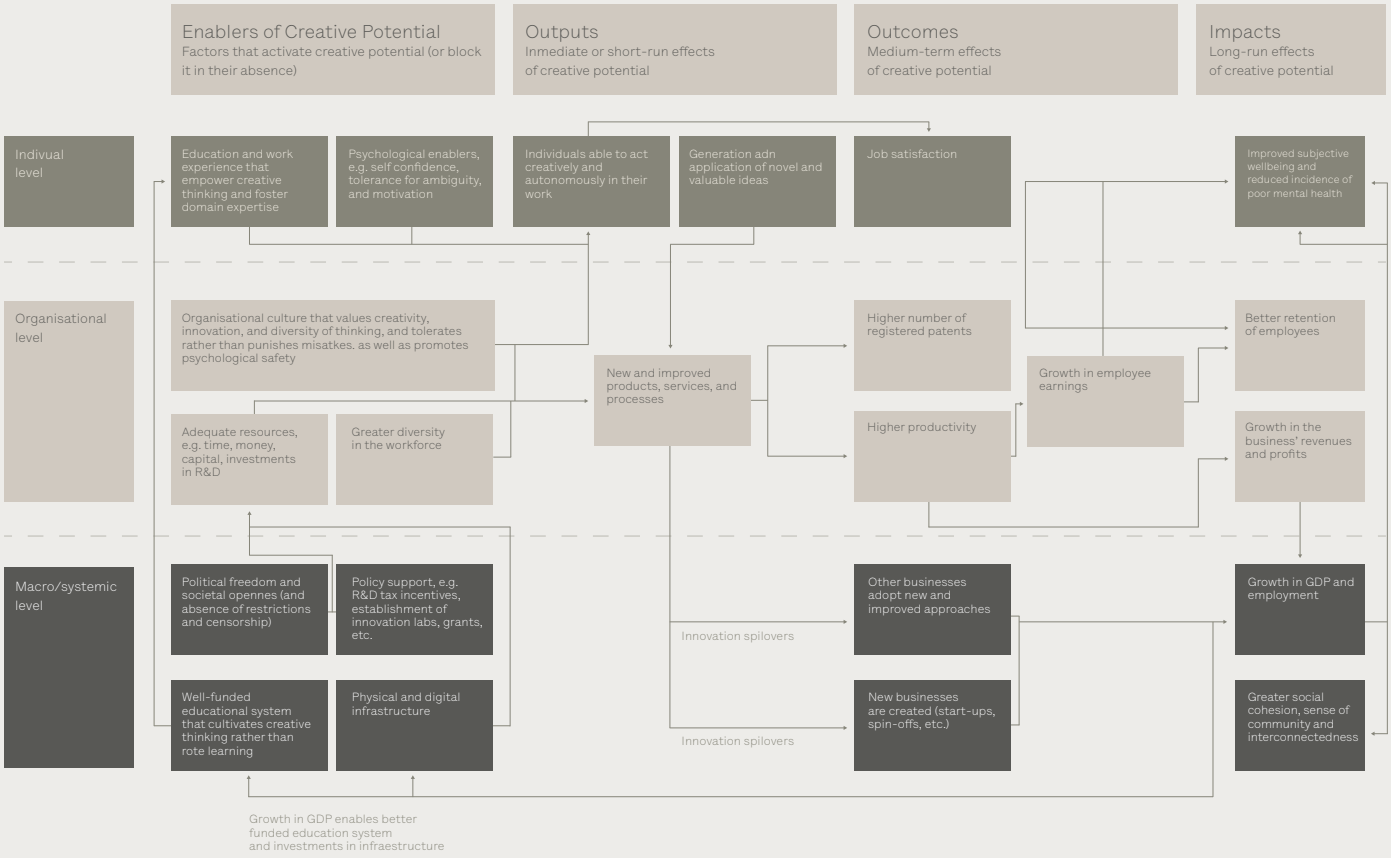
Building on this conceptual and qualitative foundation, the quantitative component of the project is articulated through the Creative Economy Index (CEI)[11], developed by Oxford Economics. The CEI provides a systematic and data-driven way to measure creativity within the economy by analysing the tasks performed in each occupation. Rather than relying on job titles or broad sectoral classifications, the index evaluates creativity at the task level, allowing for a more precise and comparable assessment across countries, sectors and occupational structures.

The construction of the CEI follows a rigorous multi-step methodology. First, creativity is defined in operational terms as the extent to which completing a task requires generating outputs, ideas or methods that are novel and valuable within a given work context. This definition is translated into a four-level taxonomy—high, medium, low and none—which captures the varying degrees of creative intensity embedded within tasks. More than 17,000 tasks from the O*NET database were then scored using supervised machine-learning techniques, informed by an initial sample manually labelled by expert analysts to train and validate the model. The resulting classifications allow for a granular representation of how creativity is distributed within occupations.

These task-level scores are subsequently aggregated to produce creativity scores for jobs, sectors and countries, using employment weights derived from Eurostat data to ensure representativeness. This enables the CEI to reveal structural patterns—such as the concentration of high-creativity occupations in particular sectors, or the extent to which different countries' labour markets rely on creative-intensive activities. Finally, using the conceptual framework developed (see figure 14) the index is analysed in relation to a range of social and economic indicators, such as earnings, job satisfaction, investment in education and R&D, and civil liberties, helping to situate creativity within broader dynamics of wellbeing, inequality and economic performance.

11. European countries using Eurostat data, based on a sample comprising 34 countries, including the 27 EU Member States, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Norway, Serbia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Figure 14. Creative Potential Framework




Source: Oxford Economics

For the report, variables were selected that showed correlation with the outcomes and enablers identified in the framework, such as education, investment in research and development (R&D), freedom, and cultural participation. While these relationships are descriptive rather than causal, they provide indicative evidence of creativity's contribution to broader economic and social wellbeing.

Through this approach, the CEI adds an empirical dimension to the project's understanding of creativity, grounding conceptual insights and expert perspectives in quantifiable evidence. It also offers a replicable framework that can be updated over time, enabling future analyses of how structural changes—technological, demographic or institutional—shape the role of creativity in economies and societies.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods enables a triangulated interpretation of creative potential. Quantitative results reveal structural patterns and correlations, while qualitative insights provide explanatory depth and normative orientation, forming an analytical narrative of creative potential—how it is cultivated, which forces hold it back, and how it can become a real lever for social transformation.

# 10 Annex 2: Country Abbreviation (ISO Code)[11]

| Country | Abbreviation |
|---|---|
| Austria | AT |
| Belgium | BE |
| Bosnia and Herzegovia | BA |
| Bulgaria | BG |
| Croatia | HR |
| Cyprus | CY |
| Czechia | CZ |
| Denmark | DK |
| Estonia | EE |
| Euro Area-20 | EA20 |
| European Union-27 (2020) | EU27_2020 |
| Finland | FI |
| France | FR |
| Germany | DE |
| Grecee | GR |
| Hungary | HU |
| Iceland | IS |
| Ireland | IE |

| Country | Abbreviation |
|---|---|
| Italy | IT |
| Latvia | LV |
| Lithuania | LT |
| Luxembourg | LU |
| Malta | MY |
| Netherlands | NL |
| Norway | NO |
| Poland | PL |
| Portugal | PT |
| Romania | RO |
| Serbia | RS |
| Slovakia | SK |
| Slovenia | SI |
| Spain | ES |
| Sweden | SE |
| Switzerland | CH |
| Turkey | TR |
| United Kingdom | UK |

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