



Forum : Citizen’s forum of Labour
Theme : Empowering the youth to drive/ thrive/ embrace and match the requirements of the future labour market

2026

Name of the citizen : Laura Ezquerro Duran

Family situation ☐ Married / dating ☒ Single ☐ With kids, if so how many _____	Education level ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☒ University
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1. How are you concerned by the subject?

I am a Japanese man in my 40s, and I work as a character concept artist at Shapefarm, a game studio in Tokyo. My job is creative, but it is close to what this forum is about: AI and a labour market that changes fast. Japan has a very old population and could be missing over 11 million workers by 2040. So you might think young people will easily find work, but it is not that simple."

AI makes images by finding patterns in huge amounts of data, much of it taken from real artists. But it has no life, no feelings and no memories, so AI cannot imagine something new like a person can. Everyone can be creative, and that is the point. Art is about the process, not only the result: the ideas, the mistakes, the hours of practice. When AI generates a picture, it takes a few seconds, and artists' work starts to look less valuable, even though it is not. Therefore, we need to protect creative work. Otherwise, we run the risk of missing the artists of the future.

In my field, AI is already changing things. A survey among Japanese creators found that nearly 89% see generative AI as a threat to their livelihood. About 1 in 10 had already lost income, and a similar number were thinking about quitting. Some anime studios already use AI for colouring, backgrounds and in-between frames, tasks that often go to beginners. This is hard for young artists, because entry-level work is how we learn our job. The report says 66% of companies are cutting entry-level hiring because of AI, and Big Tech cut graduate hiring by 25% in 2024. If young people cannot get a first job where they can learn, they cannot become the experienced workers of tomorrow.

In addition, like many others in this industry, I have a temporary contract. This is a general problem in Japan, the gap between regular and non-regular jobs (part-time, temporary). Many people turn to freelance work, but freelancers often have no pension, no sick pay and little legal protection. They can be easily dismissed from the job. Japan passed a Freelance Act in November 2024 (the law forces companies to treat freelancers fairly by requiring clear contracts, on-time payments, and protection from harassment) which is a good start, but the laws have not kept up with AI.

2. What do you suggest on your scale ?

The AI in the creative industry poses many challenges that we need to address.

First, schools should teach the basics (drawing, design, creative thinking) and how to use AI as a tool, not a replacement. It is important that we understand how AI works and how it can be useful but if we do not have the basic skills we are giving AI all the power. This could be applied to all fields.

Second, it is key that we keep entry-level jobs and on-the-job learning, for example, with government support to help studios hire juniors and train them with experienced artists. Germany is a good example: apprentices spend about 60% of their time at a company and 40% at school, get about 800 euros a month, and about 68% stay at the company after. In Singapore, people aged 40 and over get extra money for training that can be used along the whole working life.

Third, we need more transparency. AI work should be labelled, and AI companies should say which artworks they used for training. Japan's copyright law lets companies train AI on artists' work without asking the artists, and over 70% of companies using AI in creative work do not say so. In August 2026, Japan made a code asking AI companies to explain their training data, but it is voluntary, so it should become a real rule. The EU AI Act only asks for a summary, not a list of works, so Japan should go further.

Fourth, young freelancers need fair pay, written contracts, and no pressure to accept lower prices just because AI is cheaper. They could form groups, like guilds in the United States, to ask for better conditions together.

In conclusion, the goal is not to stop AI, but to use it as a tool that helps people and never replaces them. Of course, we can't close our eyes to the many advantages of artificial intelligence but we need to make sure we know how it works, so that we can always verify its result, and we need to protect those activities that are part of the essence of being human, like artistic production.