



ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ITS IMPACT ON REMUNERATION SYSTEMS IN AUDIOVISUAL SERVICE PROVIDERS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Maria Bartekova¹, Frantisek Pollak²

^{1), 2)} Bratislava University of Economics and Business, Bratislava, Slovakia

e-mails: ¹maria.bartekova@euba.sk, ²frantisek.pollak@euba.sk

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ABSTRACT

Background: In audiovisual services, remuneration development may be influenced by economic performance, but also by sector-specific characteristics such as project-based work, contractual arrangements, intellectual property rights and the position of audiovisual workers in the value chain. This issue is particularly relevant in Central Europe, where countries share similar post-transition economic backgrounds, but differ in wage levels, labour market structures and institutional frameworks. **Objectives:** The paper aims to determine whether economic growth, measured by GDP growth, is reflected in remuneration development in the audiovisual sector. **Methods/Approach:** The study is based on a quantitative analysis of secondary statistical data. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis are used to assess the relationship between remuneration, country-specific effects, time effects and economic growth in the analysed countries. **Results:** The results show that economic growth has a positive coefficient in the regression model, suggesting a possible positive association between GDP growth and remuneration in audiovisual service providers. However, this relationship is not statistically significant, and the overall model does not provide sufficient evidence that economic growth directly explains remuneration development in the sector. **Conclusions:** The paper concludes that remuneration in audiovisual services cannot be explained only by macroeconomic growth. Fair and sustainable remuneration depends on a broader combination of factors, including employment status, contractual conditions, collective bargaining, intellectual property rights, sectoral structure and institutional mechanisms that determine how the benefits of economic growth are distributed within the audiovisual sector.

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INTRODUCTION

Economic growth can expand demand, investment and firms' capacity to increase pay, but wage transmission is neither automatic nor uniform across sectors. European evidence indicates that wages respond to productivity, inflation, labour shortages and institutional wage-setting arrangements, rather than to GDP growth alone (European Commission, 2024, 2025a; International Monetary Fund, 2026). This distinction is especially relevant in audiovisual services, whose revenues depend on household consumption, advertising, public and private investment and demand for digital content.

¹ Corresponding author, **Maria Bartekova** – maria.bartekova@euba.sk.



Audiovisual production combines creative, technical and commercial activities with project-based work, freelancing, copyright-based income and repeated exploitation of works. These arrangements can generate unstable earnings and unequal bargaining positions even when sectoral demand expands (Been et al., 2023; Willekens et al., 2018; Brook et al., 2020). Market growth may therefore increase company revenues without producing proportionate wage, fee or royalty growth for workers and authors.

Digital platforms have widened distribution and monetisation opportunities while intensifying questions about licensing, buy-out contracts and the allocation of value. Research on platformisation and gig work shows that technological change can raise productivity and market reach while shifting risk to workers or concentrating gains at firm and platform level (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Vallas & Schor, 2020; Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020; Graetz & Michaels, 2018). In response, European copyright policy has strengthened the principle of appropriate and proportionate remuneration for authors and performers (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2019; European Audiovisual Observatory, 2024; European Parliament, 2023).

Central Europe provides a useful comparative setting. Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary share post-transition and EU-integration trajectories, yet differ in wage levels, labour productivity, market size and collective-bargaining institutions. Wage convergence has been supported by economic growth and productivity, but institutional coordination remains comparatively weak and company-level wage setting is widespread (Galgóczi, 2013; European Commission, 2024). The Polish audiovisual case further suggests that market expansion is more likely to benefit creators when statutory remuneration rights and collective management are enforceable (Society of Audiovisual Authors et al., 2022).

Existing studies explain wage dynamics in creative industries through inequality, skills, technology and labour-market institutions, while sector reports document changes in audiovisual markets and licensing practices (Loots & van Bennekom, 2023; Kalfas et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; European Audiovisual Observatory, 2025). However, limited comparative evidence tests whether short-run GDP growth is associated with remuneration in audiovisual service providers across Central European countries. This leaves a gap between macroeconomic accounts of wage growth and sector-specific research on creative labour.

This study addresses that gap by asking: Is annual GDP growth associated with remuneration in audiovisual service providers in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary? The analysis uses a 2021-2025 country-year panel and estimates a regression model with GDP growth, country effects and year effects. Because the design is observational and the sample is small, the analysis evaluates association rather than causal impact.

The contribution is twofold. Empirically, the study provides an exploratory cross-country test of the GDP growth-remuneration relationship in a sector for which harmonised data are limited. Conceptually, it interprets the statistical result through the literature on wage-setting institutions, digitalisation, creative labour and remuneration rights. The following section develops this framework, after which the methodology, results, discussion and implications are presented.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Macroeconomic and institutional determinants

Research on Central and Eastern Europe links wage convergence to economic growth, productivity gains, foreign investment, EU integration and minimum-wage development. Galgóczi (2013) nevertheless identifies a tension between rising real wages and weakening collective-bargaining coverage. Recent European assessments similarly show that wage outcomes reflect inflation, labour demand, productivity and wage-setting institutions, not GDP growth in isolation (European Commission, 2024, 2025a; International Monetary Fund, 2026). This literature implies that country growth can create financial space for higher pay, but the degree of transmission depends on bargaining arrangements and firm-level decisions.

Technological change adds a distributional dimension. Routine-biased technologies tend to complement non-routine cognitive work and polarise demand between high-skilled and routine occupations (Autor et al., 2003; Goos et al., 2014; Michaels et al., 2014). Digitalisation can raise productivity, yet labour's share of those gains depends on ownership, market concentration and institutional safeguards (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020; Graetz & Michaels, 2018; Oleš & Tan, 2025). In audiovisual firms, this mechanism may increase the value of digital production, post-production, content-management and platform skills without guaranteeing that productivity gains are reflected in remuneration.

Audiovisual labour, platforms and remuneration rights

Creative labour markets are characterised by project work, self-employment, irregular income and substantial unpaid or underpaid activity. Earnings are unequally distributed, and access to sustained creative careers is shaped by bargaining power and the ability to absorb income risk (Been et al., 2023; Brook et al., 2020; Loots & van Bennekom, 2023; Willekens et al., 2018). These features distinguish audiovisual remuneration from standard employee-wage models and weaken the expectation that macroeconomic growth will be transmitted evenly across occupations and contractual forms.

Platformisation has expanded audience reach and revenue opportunities but has also altered contractual practices and the allocation of rights (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Vallas & Schor, 2020). Sectoral evidence emphasises licensing terms, buy-out contracts, repeated exploitation and collective management as central determinants of author and performer income (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2024; European Commission, 2025b; European Parliament, 2023; Senftleben & Izyumenko, 2025). The Polish case indicates that statutory remuneration rights and mandatory collective management can translate market growth into more stable compensation (Society of Audiovisual Authors et al., 2022).

Digital skills and organisational capacity also affect firm growth and worker demand. Creative-industry studies associate digital transformation with new business models, regional resilience and demand for advanced skills (UNCTAD, 2022; Kalfas et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; van Laar et al., 2022; Erickson, 2024). However, these studies do not establish that GDP growth alone explains remuneration in audiovisual service providers.



Research gap and hypothesis

Taken together, the literature supports a conditional rather than automatic link between economic growth and remuneration. GDP growth may increase demand and firms' capacity to pay, while contractual fragmentation, weak bargaining, platform power and copyright arrangements determine how gains are distributed. This study isolates the short-run macroeconomic association while controlling for country and year differences.

H1: Annual GDP growth is positively associated with remuneration in audiovisual service providers in Central European countries.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a balanced country-year design covering Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary from 2021 to 2025. The four countries were selected because they share a post-transition and EU-market context but differ in wage levels, labour-market institutions and audiovisual-market scale. The unit of analysis is the country-year, producing 20 observations.

The research question is: Is annual GDP growth associated with remuneration in audiovisual service providers in the four countries? H1 predicts a positive association. The small sample and observational design make the analysis exploratory; the estimates should not be interpreted as causal effects.

Secondary data were obtained from the Eurostat series cited in the reference list: real GDP growth and labour costs (Eurostat, 2026a, 2026b). Owing to differences in national reporting, the remuneration indicator uses the closest available activity classifications covering information, communication, cultural and audiovisual services. This harmonisation constraint should be considered when comparing countries.

Data sources and variables

The dependent variable, *Rem_it*, is the annual remuneration measure for audiovisual-related services in country *i* and year *t*. The principal independent variable, *Growth_it*, is the annual percentage change in real GDP. Country and year indicators capture time-invariant country differences and common annual shifts. The Czech Republic and 2021 serve as the reference categories, as shown in Table 2.

The study estimates the following ordinary least squares model: $Rem_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Growth_{it} + \sum_y \gamma_y Year_y + \sum_c \delta_c Country_c + \varepsilon_{it}$. Here, β_1 represents the estimated change in remuneration associated with a one-unit increase in GDP growth, holding the country and year indicators constant.

Statistical significance is evaluated at $\alpha = 0.05$. The overall F test and R^2 statistics assess model fit; coefficient estimates, standard errors, t statistics, p values and 95% confidence intervals assess individual terms.

Model diagnostics include the Durbin-Watson test for residual autocorrelation, variance inflation factors and tolerance for multicollinearity, and the Shapiro-Wilk test for residual normality.



RESULTS

Table 1 presents the overall fit of the regression model used to examine the relationship between remuneration in audiovisual service providers and selected explanatory variables, including year, country and economic growth. The model explains approximately 46.0% of the variability in remuneration, as indicated by the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.460$. However, the adjusted R^2 is considerably lower, reaching only 0.0673, which suggests that after accounting for the number of predictors and the sample size, the explanatory power of the model is rather limited. The overall model test is not statistically significant ($F = 1.17$; $p = 0.394$), meaning that the model as a whole does not provide sufficient statistical evidence to explain variations in remuneration. This result indicates that the development of remuneration in audiovisual services cannot be explained only by the included variables and may also depend on other sector-specific, institutional or technological factors.

Table 1. Model Fit Measures – Linear Regression

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.678	0.460	0.0673	1.17	8	11	0.394

Source: Own calculations

Note. Models estimated using sample size of $N=20$

Table 2 shows the estimated regression coefficients for the dependent variable Rem. The results indicate that none of the included predictors is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. In comparison with the reference year 2021, remuneration was lower in 2022, but this difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.940$). Positive coefficients were observed for the years 2023, 2024 and 2025, which suggests a possible increase in remuneration compared with 2021; however, these effects were also statistically insignificant. The largest positive estimate was recorded for 2023, but the p -value of 0.258 does not allow this difference to be interpreted as statistically confirmed. With regard to country effects, Poland and Hungary show higher estimated remuneration compared with the Czech Republic, while Slovakia shows only a very small positive difference. Nevertheless, none of these country differences is statistically significant. The coefficient for economic growth is positive (Estimate = 0.677), which means that higher GDP growth is associated with higher remuneration in the model. However, this relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.609$), and therefore the results do not provide sufficient evidence that economic growth directly affects remuneration in audiovisual service providers.

Table 3 presents the Durbin–Watson test for autocorrelation of residuals. The Durbin–Watson statistic reaches 2.38 and the p -value is 0.916. This result indicates that there is no statistically significant autocorrelation in the residuals of the model. Therefore, from the perspective of residual independence, the model can be considered acceptable.



Table 2. Model Coefficients - Remuneration

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Stand. Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Intercept ^a	-0.166	8.08	-0.0205	0.984			
Year:							
2022 – 2021	-0.437	5.69	-0.0768	0.940	-0.0670	-1.988	1.85
2023 – 2021	10.077	8.45	1.1928	0.258	1.5461	-1.307	4.40
2024 – 2021	5.303	6.98	0.7597	0.463	0.8137	-1.544	3.17
2025 – 2021	5.436	6.88	0.7899	0.446	0.8340	-1.490	3.16
Country:							
HU – CZ	3.851	3.99	0.9649	0.355	0.5908	-0.757	1.94
PL – CZ	6.468	4.54	1.4236	0.182	0.9924	-0.542	2.53
SK – CZ	0.219	3.98	0.0551	0.957	0.0337	-1.311	1.38
Growth	0.677	1.29	0.5260	0.609	0.2439	-0.777	1.26

^a Represents reference level

Source: Own calculations

Table 3. Durbin–Watson Test for Autocorrelation

Autocorrelation	DW Statistic	p
-0.192	2.38	0.916

Source: Own calculations

Table 4 reports the collinearity statistics for the independent variables. The variance inflation factor values are low for all predictors: 1.19 for year, 1.06 for country and 2.09 for economic growth. Since all VIF values are well below the commonly used threshold of 5, the results indicate that multicollinearity is not a serious problem in the model. The tolerance values also confirm this conclusion, as they remain above the critical threshold. This means that the explanatory variables do not strongly overlap with each other and can be retained in the model without substantial concern about multicollinearity.

Table 4. Collinearity Statistics

	VIF	Tolerance
Year	1.19	0.842
Country	1.06	0.944
Growth	2.09	0.478

Source: Own calculations

Table 5 presents the Shapiro–Wilk normality test of residuals. The test statistic is 0.978 and the p-value is 0.913. Since the p-value is substantially higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis of normal distribution cannot be rejected. This means that the residuals of the model can be considered normally distributed. The result supports



the validity of the regression model assumptions and indicates that the model does not show a serious problem with non-normality of residuals.

Table 5. Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

Statistic	p
0.978	0.913

Source: Own calculations

H1 assumed that there is a positive relationship between economic growth, measured by GDP growth, and remuneration in the audiovisual sector in Central European countries. The regression coefficient for economic growth is positive (Estimate = 0.677), which indicates that the direction of the relationship is consistent with the hypothesis. However, the relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.609$). Therefore, H1 is not supported. Although the model suggests a positive association between GDP growth and remuneration, the evidence is not strong enough to confirm that economic growth has a statistically significant impact on remuneration in audiovisual service providers.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of findings

The central finding is not that economic growth is irrelevant, but that its short-run association with audiovisual remuneration is too uncertain to distinguish from zero in this small sample. The positive coefficient is consistent with the idea that expanding economies can increase demand and firms' capacity to pay. The non-significant model and low adjusted R^2 , however, indicate that country, year and GDP growth alone do not capture the mechanisms that determine who receives the gains.

This interpretation accords with creative-labour research showing that project work, unpaid activity, income inequality and weak bargaining can disconnect sectoral expansion from individual earnings (Been et al., 2023; Brook et al., 2020; Willekens et al., 2018). It also complements technology and platform studies: digital tools may raise productivity and demand for specialised skills, while ownership and contractual arrangements determine whether the additional value is transferred through wages, fees or royalties (Autor et al., 2003; Goos et al., 2014; Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

The findings also support an institutional reading of remuneration. The literature on licensing and copyright emphasises appropriate and proportionate remuneration, transparent contracts and mechanisms for repeated exploitation (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2024; European Commission, 2025b; Senftleben & Izyumenko, 2025). The Polish case suggests that statutory remuneration rights and collective management can help convert market growth into more stable author income (Society of Audiovisual Authors et al., 2022). The present analysis cannot test these mechanisms directly, but its weak macroeconomic result is consistent with their importance.

The study adds to the international literature by testing a macroeconomic proposition in a specific Central European sector. It does not contradict research linking growth and productivity to wages at aggregate level;



rather, it shows that such relationships may weaken when examined within a heterogeneous creative industry and over a short period. The contribution is therefore boundary-setting: GDP growth is, at most, one contextual factor rather than a sufficient explanation of remuneration.

Practical and policy implications

For audiovisual companies, the findings support remuneration systems that are less dependent on general market growth and more explicit at project and role level. Companies should (i) establish transparent pay bands and annual review criteria; (ii) distinguish payment for development, production, post-production, promotion and digital reuse; (iii) specify royalty, licence and residual-payment terms in contracts; (iv) record compensation for freelance and project-based work alongside employee wages; and (v) monitor whether revenue growth is reflected in pay across creative, technical and support roles. These measures would make the distribution of value more observable and negotiable.

For public policy and sectoral organisations, priorities include clearer reporting of audiovisual earnings, stronger collective-negotiation capacity, enforceable remuneration rights and consistent implementation of appropriate and proportionate remuneration in digital markets. Better data should distinguish employees, self-employed workers, authors, performers, fees, royalties and licensing income. Such measures would improve both policy design and future empirical evaluation.

Limitations and future research

The sectoral remuneration measure may not capture project fees, self-employment income, unpaid work, royalties or repeated exploitation, and cross-country activity classifications may not be fully harmonised. The model also omits inflation, productivity, firm performance, contract type, collective bargaining and a direct digitalisation indicator.

Future research should extend the time horizon, use more granular firm- or worker-level data and test lagged or alternative specifications. Digitalisation could be measured through ICT intensity, streaming and video-on-demand revenues, platform use or the share of digital distribution. Surveys or interviews with workers, authors and employers would help explain how contractual mechanisms mediate the relationship between market growth and remuneration.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the article was to examine the relationship between digitalization, economic growth and remuneration systems in audiovisual service providers in Central European countries. The research focused mainly on the question of whether economic growth, expressed as GDP growth, is reflected in the development of remuneration in the audiovisual sector and whether digitalization can strengthen this relationship. The results showed that economic growth has a positive coefficient in the regression model, but this relationship was not statistically significant. Hypothesis H1 was therefore not confirmed.

The main contribution of the article is to point out that remuneration in audiovisual services cannot be explained solely through macroeconomic growth. The audiovisual sector has specific characteristics, including



the project-based nature of work, a high proportion of external and flexible forms of cooperation, the importance of copyright, the repeated use of audiovisual works and the growing role of digital platforms. These factors mean that a country's economic growth may not automatically lead to growth or a fairer remuneration of workers and authors in the sector.

The significance of the work also lies in the fact that it draws attention to the need for a broader view of remuneration systems in audiovisual services. Digitization creates new opportunities for distribution, monetization and international dissemination of content, but at the same time brings the risk that part of the value created will not be adequately reflected in the income of workers and creators. Therefore, it is important that remuneration systems reflect not only time-bound work, but also creative contribution, digital skills, repeated use of works and income arising from digital distribution.

From a practical point of view, the results indicate the need for more transparent and fair remuneration mechanisms in audiovisual companies. Managers should pay more attention to the setting of remuneration for project development, pre-production, post-production, promotion and digital use of content. From a public policy perspective, it is important to strengthen the protection of authors and workers in the audiovisual sector, to promote collective rights management, to improve negotiation mechanisms and to develop legal instruments that ensure fair remuneration also in the digital environment.

The research has several limitations. The first limitation is the smaller size of the dataset, which may affect the statistical power of the model. The second limitation is the use of secondary data, which may not fully capture project revenues, royalties, licensing income, unpaid work or self-employment income. The third limitation is the absence of a direct indicator of digitalization in the regression model. Digitalization was analyzed in the article as a contextual and sectoral factor, but its direct statistical impact requires further investigation.

Future research should aim to expand the dataset, cover a longer time period and incorporate more precise indicators of digitalisation, such as revenues from video-on-demand services, the use of streaming platforms, the digital intensity of businesses, the use of ICT or the share of digital distribution in the total revenues of the audiovisual sector. It would also be beneficial to complement the quantitative analysis with questionnaire research among workers, authors and businesses in the audiovisual sector. Such an approach would allow a better understanding of how digitalisation is reflected in specific working conditions, contractual relations and remuneration systems.

In conclusion, it can be stated that economic growth and digitalisation create important preconditions for the development of the audiovisual sector, but do not in themselves guarantee fair and sustainable remuneration. A key challenge for Central European countries is therefore to link digital transformation and economic growth with transparent, enforceable and fair remuneration mechanisms that will better reflect the value of creative and digital work in audiovisual services.



Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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About the authors



Maria BARTEKOVA,

Assoc. prof. Dr. Maria Bartekova, Ph.D. is an expert in the field of management with a focus on the creative industries. Assoc. prof. Bartekova was the principal investigator of the prestigious Horizon Europe project. She is the author of more than 100 publications and also serves as a reviewer for renowned international journals and as an evaluator of research projects. In 2025, she received the Rector's Award for the Development of Science and Research.

Research interests: Creative Industries, Remuneration, SMEs, Circular Economy

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2691-3185



Frantisek POLLAK,

Associate Professor at the Bratislava University of Economics and Business, supervisor of doctoral students. He was nominated for the 2012 Student Personality of the Year Award and was a world semifinalist in the 2008 Intel Berkeley Entrepreneurship Challenge. He has also received numerous distinctions for his academic work, including the Best Paper Award at GBC 2015, the Excellence Award at Megatrends and Media 2016, and the Best Paper Award at the AAR17 New York Conference in 2017. In addition, he delivered a keynote address at the EEEU 2025 Conference in Seoul.

Research interests: corporate reputation in the context of sustainable development; Digitization, Creative industries, SMEs, Reputation

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6346-8629

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