



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

# Revealing Women's Potential in the Creative Economy



**APEC Policy Partnership  
on Women and the Economy**

November 2024





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## Opening Remarks

APEC Workshop on Revealing APEC Women's Potential in the Creative Economy is organized by the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation as part of the project within the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

APEC plays an important role in promoting women's leadership and empowerment. Across the APEC region and beyond, women are the driving force behind economic growth.

Despite their immense contributions, there is a crucial gap in women's participation in the APEC creative sector. The lack of comprehensive data and accurate information about the barriers faced by women in the region is one of the most essential challenges that the workshop aims to address.

Realizing the full potential of women in the creative industries can be possible through access to capital and markets, facilitating their rise to leadership positions, and collecting data to drive effective policy decisions.

The project, the Russian economy implements within PPWE, aims to equip APEC economies with the best practices that proved effective around APEC and world-wide (based on UNCTAD inputs) to empower women within the creative economy and recommendations to realize the full potential of the creative sector across the Asia-Pacific region.

### **APEC Women's Participation in the Creative Economy**

*Ms. Evgeniia Drozhashchikh, Deputy Director of the Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects, Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation*

According to UNCTAD's Creative Economy Outlook 2022, the cultural sector accounts for 3.1 percent of global GDP, whereas creative goods represent 3 percent of total merchandise exports and 21 percent of service exports. The cultural and creative industries provide 6.2 percent of all employment, generate nearly 50 million jobs worldwide, and employ more young people (15–29 years old) than other sectors. The creative economy promotes social inclusion, cultural diversity, and human development, which places the creative industries as crucial sectors for achieving the 2030 agenda.

As for the Russian case study, the key document that guides the economy in fostering creative economy domestically is the Concept of Developing Creative Industries till 2030, approved by the Russian Government in 2021. It provides a definition of creative industries, creative economy and creative clusters.

According to the specific Action Plan, elaborated under the Concept, it is expected that the share of creative industries in Russia will increase from 2.2 percent in 2022 to 6 percent by 2030, and the share of employment will increase from 4.7 percent in 2022 to 15 percent by 2030. Another KPI relates to the share of creative entrepreneurship in Russia's and global economies. All expectations will be fulfilled after the adoption of the Federal Law on the Development of Creative Industries, which is currently under consideration by Russia's Parliament<sup>1</sup>.

In parallel with strategic planning, the Russian Government creates favorable environment for the launch of specialized institutions. One of them, the Federation of Creative Industries, is successfully fulfilling its mission of transforming creative industries into a sustainable segment of the economy. The Federation provides systemic support to all the sectoral market entities, with its activities being divided into 7 thematic blocks. They are human resources, investments, infrastructure, regional ecosystems, business-to-government (B2G) communication, promotion and market research and forecasting.

At the regional level within Russia, there is substantial progress from the lens of legislative and financial, training, and analytical support for the creative industries. For example, Yakutia, Russia in 2019, approved its Concept for the Development of the Creative Economy until 2025. The Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Region adopted the Law "On Creative Industries" in 2020, the Kaliningrad Region launched a special Krespektiva Creative Industries Fund, "Siberian Development Institute" was established in Krasnoyarsk to underpin creative sector of economy and train the new generation of creative product makers.

There is a number of related issues that may be discussed jointly within APEC fora: provision of high-quality, sex-disaggregated, analytical research and statistics collection, prospects for integration of new technology, such as artificial intelligence, into creative industries and emerging risks for creative professionals, including the importance

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<sup>1</sup> The Workshop was held before the enactment of the Federal Law "On the Development of Creative Industries in the Russian Federation", signed by the President of the Russian Federation on August 8, 2024.

of promoting intellectual property rights, training of talents and financing of creative initiatives.

*Mr. Marat Berdyev, Ambassador-at-Large, Senior Official from Russia to APEC*

Russia has long served as a champion and contributor in the areas of women economic empowerment and creative industries alongside APEC's mandate and designation as a valuable incubator of ideas. It is crucial to integrate these topics into a wider effort to ensure sustainable economic growth, and decent work for all the people irrespective of their age, sex, or any other distinction.

Women play a pivotal role in society and economy, occupying leading positions, running businesses, and demonstrate themselves as effective decision makers.

In order to facilitate and further promote opportunities for women in creative economy Russia has enacted two important documents that set Russia's general guidance in this regard, including the National Strategy on Women and Federal Law of 2023 on Development of Creative Industries.

Creative industries continue to impact our societies. It was manifested in the proclamation by the UN in 2021 of the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

Russia is following the suit. The sector of creative industries is growing in the economy. Today it amounts to about 5 percent and is expanding rapidly. Meanwhile, women account for more than half of the Russian population and represent 55 percent of overall professionals with higher education. The Russian Government is working hard to fully realize their potential and ensure that women have a strong say in the economy. A special focus lies on closing the pay gap between men and women and expanding women's participation in STEM and Liberal Arts.

Russia pays special attention to providing a good work-life balance for all women and allowing them to comfortably combine their career ambition and family patterns. Necessary efforts are made to deliver on public services in the field of childcare, healthcare, education and social protection.

It is recognized that women could act as agents of change in the creative economy. To support progress in this direction APEC could address multiple bottlenecks, shortcomings and deficiencies. One of the ways to do that proved to be effective within APEC is advocating, improving and advertising best cases of women entrepreneurship.



One of the activities supporting women's engagement in creative industries is the annual APEC BEST AWARD (Business Efficiency and Success Target) that for several years distinguishes women MSMEs and popularizes effective business models in such a nomination as "BEST Creative Economy Project".

*Ms. Marisa Henderson, Rotating Office-in-Charge, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)*

The activity of UNCTAD is directed at the maintenance of women's cultural identity and empowering them economically. To showcase the profound impact of integrating women into the creative economy, UNCTAD organizes different endeavors with governments (recent example – the Philippines). These initiatives demonstrate how women have harnessed their cultural heritage, weaving it into globally recognized products.

The creative economy is a rapidly growing sector, driving income generation, job creation, and export earnings, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

According to an UNCTAD survey (to be published in 2024), the economic contribution of the creative economy varies among economies. It contributes between 0.5 and 7.3 percent of GDP and employs between 0.5 and 12.5 percent of the workforce in economies where data is available. In 2022, total exports of creative services reached a record USD1.4 trillion, nearly double that of creative goods exports, which stood at USD713 billion the same year.

A universal characteristic of creative industries is their reliance on women and young people. Globally, 45 percent of creative occupations are held by women, and 23 percent of the workforce in these industries is aged between 15 and 29. This demographic represents a significant portion of the creative workforce, emphasizing the need for targeted support and investments to foster inclusive economic development and the empowerment of women and youth.

The digital divide remains a pressing concern, which is expressed in women's lack of access to digital tools essential for artistic creation and distribution. Worldwide, 250 million fewer women than men use the Internet. Bridging this digital gap is crucial for women to fully participate in and benefit from the digital transformation of the creative economy.

Gender equality is fundamental to achieving a genuine diversity of cultural expressions and ensuring equal opportunities. Yet, women continue to face numerous barriers, including unequal access to decent work, fair remuneration, and leadership positions.

The creative economy plays a vital role in economic inclusion. By linking local producers of crafts to global markets through sustainable tourism and e-commerce, creative industries promote inclusive local economic development. These processes remove barriers to entry for a variety of producers, particularly in remote areas, empowering populations and encouraging community participation in decision-making processes.

South-South trade in creative goods has seen remarkable growth, almost doubling in the past two decades. In 2020, South-South trade accounted for 40.5 percent of creative exports by developing economies, including jewelry, interior design products, recorded media, fashion, and toys, thus fostering new opportunities and diversification for developing economies, enhancing their participation in dynamic global markets.

To realize the potential of the creative economy, UNCTAD recommends:

- create innovative and targeted policies that address the digital divide;
- promote gender equality;
- support sustainable practices.

## **Barriers and Opportunities for Women in the Creative Economy**

Mr. Victor Freundt Melendez, *Tourism Offer Innovation Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism of Peru*

Creativity is an important aspect for solving diverse problems in different parts of the world.

In June 2024, Peru organized a TWG event to gather perspectives from public and private sector of APEC economies on the impact of creative economy development on the future of tourism in the APEC Region. Three sessions were held to cover the power of arts for the tourism sector; development of creative ecosystems; technologies, maker movement and creative tourism entrepreneurship. Speakers from eight economies, including women, presented their solutions in such areas as fashion-tech design

It appears that women are eager to share their experiences, learn how to create a product, collaborate with different brands, produce instead of consume, and use digital technologies. Their essential motivation lies in the desire to generate new interactive experiences for people and inspire them. A particular example brought by the speaker is the Maker Movement, which is a global movement underpinning DIY creation, open-source collaboration, and accessible tools. The Movement utilizes such technologies as 3D printing, laser cutting, CNC, digital fabrication tools, and coding platforms. The non-profit organization, Fab Foundation, also presented on their work to build technical capacity through Fab Labs.

The key spaces promoted by the Maker Movement are Makerspaces and Fab Labs – machine-equipped third-spaces to gather and work. They share such values as self-sufficiency and creative exploration, local production, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation. Global Network embraces: Fab Lab Network, makerspace networks, Fab City Network.

Fab Lab is a distributed network with a huge number of partners that use in their production common resources, information, and technologies. They share with each other how to address challenges. Within the Fab Lab, many programs were created for studying how to use different modern technologies and recycle materials.

The production of a greater variety of goods leads to greater international markets penetration.

According to the speaker, it is necessary to keep in mind that:

1. The beginning is not easy, change doesn't happen overnight;
2. A person begins alone, but needs a whole team to continue;
3. Thanks to ICT, creativity can happen between economies;
4. It is important to work on networks and distribute information;
5. Technologies are closer than ever before;
6. To inspire, testing and failure are necessary.

Creativity is though not the only skill that matters. The skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and literacy are essential in terms of creating products.

*Ms. Hanzela Calista Kusumamenggala, CEO & Founder of Manna Indonesia Group and Inaris International Corporation*

IN ARIS is an entity funded by Indonesian and Russian entrepreneurs. The corporation deals with the issues of trade, tourism, and investment,

with a focus on unleashing women's opportunities, and assists in promoting Indonesian products in Russia and CIS economies.

Nowadays, the INARIS opens stores, for example, in terminal C of Soekarno-Hatta airport, where it presents Indonesian MSMEs products and is waiting for the products on behalf of the Corporation's partners.

Today, most Indonesian creative products are made by women, which is a remarkable feature about the Indonesian creative economy market which earlier on experienced a larger share of men represented in the sector. The number of women producing creative goods and services is witnessing a steady growth. One of the game-changers has been digitalization that enabled more women to work remotely and manage their brands online.

The main aim of INARIS is the economic empowerment of women, not only in Indonesia but in other economies of the region too.

*Ms. Sharifah Azizah Sayeed Aman Ghazali, Managing Director and CEO, Empire Consortium Private Limited*

The creative economy in Malaysia equals to about two percent to Malaysia's GDP. The government actively participates in the expansion of creative industries, and has set the target of GDP's share up to six percent. About 160 million from the federal budget are allocated precisely for creative economy.

The government of Malaysia has created a domestic creative industry policy, which emphasizes raising awareness, improving quality of creative goods and services, and expanding the market for the creative industries locally and internationally. Among priority areas, witnessing demand for investments, are multimedia and digitalization, cultural arts and heritage industries (crafts, dance, and music).

The issues that are high on the agenda – if women in creative industries are considered – include not only digitalization and marketing. Since many women producing creative goods and services live in rural areas, the prerequisite for their creative activities to prosper is that the Government ensures accessible and affordable infrastructure and smooth logistics. The Malaysian government pays substantial attention to these tasks, and works hard to assist in rebranding and exporting domestic products to the international market, including by creating “transfer stations”.

Another important question is raising women's literacy, especially of those living in rural areas. The associations and Government agencies

need to go on teaching women how to package, and market their products with the aim of improving quality and quantity of the latter.

Since nowadays the products have to fit the ESG requirements in some APEC economies, women-led businesses, especially in rural areas, need to be consulted on how to comply with the rules.

A new generation of talents shall be trained with a view to avoid brain drain. This could be achieved by more active promotion of digital content making. This activity does not pose any excessive barriers on the content-makers and could be a worthy, cross-cultural endeavor.

## **Recommendations for Empowering APEC Women in Creative Economy**

*Ms. Natalia Strigunova, Head, Department of International Cooperation, Public Relations and Scientific Cooperation Work, Diplomatic Academy of the MFA of Russia*

The creative industries are rapidly evolving, they will have an increasing presence in the world economy and in the APEC economies in the forthcoming future.

Women are always at the forefront, breaking all sorts of barriers and shaping the future of creativity across art, design, fashion, architecture and other sectors.

Along with traditional barriers such as the gender pay gap, self-doubt, the notorious glass ceiling of many women entrepreneurs, and lack of business experience, new challenges have emerged. In particular, the emergence of digital solutions and innovative technologies like generative AI has become a new barrier, leaving many women uncertain about their futures.

Taking into account traditional and modern challenges, APEC economies face the task of creating an enabling environment for the prosperity and success of creative women.

Elevating inspiring role models in the creative industry within APEC should support women in this sector. By sharing success stories and best practices from partner economies, women can become better informed and motivated to accelerate career advancement in creative industries.

Among success stories of the Russian entrepreneurs is the one of the Russian watch house Palekh Watch. This watch series combines ultra-precise mechanisms with native Russian art, continuing the tradition

of painting, which is more than 400 years old. On the dials, the paintings of Russian life are recreated by the hands of craftswomen from the village of Palekh. Apart from popularizing the highly artistic Russian folk crafts, manufacturing of watches has already provided jobs for many women from provincial towns and villages of Russia.

According to the speaker, to foster a more inclusive and empowering environment for women in creative industries APEC economies can:

1. implement equitable policies that promote gender equality, fair compensation, and equal advancement and career opportunities for women in creative industries;
2. provide mentorship and sponsorship programs and opportunities that nurture and support the development and growth of talented women within companies and organizations;
3. create comfortable working conditions, allowing women to combine creative activities with maternal and family duties;
4. demonstrate the seriousness of the values of equality and inclusion.

The emphasis on creating a supportive environment such as access to financing, mentorship, and introduction of specifically designed policies for women in the creative industry is essential for driving innovation and growth.

It is also important to give voice and acknowledge those women, who have already achieved significant success on the path to creating prosperous businesses. In This regard The Russian initiative APEC BEST Award stands out as a significant initiative, showcasing the talents and achievements of women entrepreneurs across the region. Recognition of individual successes serves as an inspiration for others to pursue their own entrepreneurial dreams.

*Ms. Anastasia Kalenova, Creative Producer, Architecture and Urban Culture Forum “Prostranstvo”*

The share of women and young people in the creative economy is more than one-third, which means these groups play an essential role in the spheres of architecture and urban culture.

There is a term “urbanism for women”, that covers women as architects and as urban infrastructure users. According to UNCTAD, 57 percent of the world’s population lived in urban areas in 2022. By 2045, the world’s urban population will increase 1.5 times to 6 billion.

It is important to plan quickly how to provide the basic services and make life for women in cities more comfortable.

Firstly, a crucial point is that a woman better understands what she needs in the city – based on personal experience. That is why women architects give women's needs top priority (e.g. routes between shops and consumer services, kindergartens, and playgrounds).

Secondly, it is teamwork that is the basis of successful work in the architectural industry. At the same time, organization of forums and platforms for discussions is helpful in promoting women in creative industries.

Thirdly, it is trusting young women specialists in charging them with important or difficult construction projects. Nowadays, the number of women is increasing in related spheres, such as architecture (which is witnessed even under the competitions held by the "Prostranstvo" one of the largest competitions for young designers and architects in Russia). The Smart home tech is another related topic in its focus.

The crucial obstacle for women in this sphere is getting a leadership position in architectural bureaus, which are traditionally led by men. Despite the changing context in the world, it is easier to realize as an architect in regions where there are few architects and they are in great demand. On the other hand, not every leader will give a young and not very experienced author a big project.

Women have potential in leadership, creativity, cooperation, and establishing connections, which are very important for the development of the industry. Therefore, supporting women in business and their active participation in different areas of life is important.

*Ms. Kim Abelar, CEO, KIMSDIARY MILLION GLOW*

The company is specializing in the production of vitamins and dietary supplements, and is performing groundbreakingly with Million Glow products, including juice drinks of various flavors suggesting detox and health benefits to its consumers. The company strives, among others, to help others to succeed in different markets. In this vein, the company's founder facilitates the activities of I-FERN.

The I-FERN Philippine business is directed at empowering women recognizing that with the right mindset and tenacity, everyone can succeed.

The I-FERN Mini Ladies Club focuses on holistic development by partnering with inspiring leaders. The main goal is to help the members

become strong individuals, better mothers, wives, and leaders. I-FERN Mini Ladies Club provides valuable content, including tips on self-improvement, financial independence, and personal development.

Staying ahead requires innovation and adaptation to meet the diverse needs of clients when navigating current trends. The platform of the I-FERN can be leveraged to educate and empower individuals, particularly women, across the Philippines.



## Conclusion: Issues to Be Addressed

According to the presentations made by the speakers of the APEC Workshop, issues that deserve further discussion are as follows:

- ✓ defining single *terminology* (creative industries, clusters, goods and services, etc.) and cooperating on approaches to *measuring* the participation of women in creative industries;
- ✓ analyzing prospects for integration of *new technologies*, including Artificial Intelligence, into creative industries and assessing potential risks for creative professionals, especially women;
- ✓ nurturing *talents*, providing upskilling programs, highlighting best cases of women leading creative businesses and non-commercial projects;
- ✓ attracting adequate *investments* into the creative industry;
- ✓ fostering an enabling environment for creative industries with comprehensive *government support measures*;
- ✓ introducing *innovative solutions* to increase visibility of the industry and ensure ease of entry (including but not limited to makerspaces, fab labs);
- ✓ expanding women's *access to the digital economy and addressing digital divide*;
- ✓ improving overall *gender equality*, including work-life balance for women working in creative industries, as well as access to capital and markets, fair remuneration, career opportunities and leadership positions;
- ✓ granting targeted support measures to women entrepreneurs with a focus on *MSMEs and startups*, assisting women with marketing and exporting;
- ✓ raising women's *awareness on peculiarities* of operation of regional markets;
- ✓ providing *mentorship and networking* opportunities, both domestically and internationally;
- ✓ exploring *specific needs* of women employed in creative industries (e.g. architecture, arts).