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# Content Creators and Collective Representation: Emerging Forms of Resistance in the Creator Economy

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## Abstract

Drawing on a completed study of content creators who earn their living on YouTube, Twitch and similar platforms, this contribution examines how workers formally classed as self-employed are nonetheless locked into a regime of one-sided contracts, opaque ranking algorithms and platform-controlled revenue streams. The article explores the legal and institutional terrain in which these asymmetries play out and asks whether, in such a fragmented and individualised market, collective organisation is possible-and if so, what form it should take, against which counterparties and on which substantive issues.

The analysis combines close reading of EU labour, competition and data-protection norms with a desk-based survey of the most visible creator-led initiatives, from the YouTubers Union/FairTube alliance with IG Metall to newer national experiments in Italy and USA. Particular attention is paid to the evolving EU landscape: Article 101 TFEU, the Commission's 2022 Guidance on collective agreements of solo self-employed workers, and the 2024/2831 promise greater room for bargaining, yet leave key uncertainties.

Empirically, creators are beginning to fashion a collective identity that oscillates between the professional guild, centred on reputation and advisory services, and the trade-union model, oriented towards redistribution and voice. This ambiguity generates internal tensions over membership boundaries, dues and tactics. Platforms remain the obvious bargaining target, but advertisers and agencies-whose decisions shape a large share of creator income-seldom enter the negotiations, limiting potential leverage. Meanwhile, the creators' agenda has broadened beyond revenue splits to include algorithmic explainability, guaranteed human review, data portability and mental-health safeguards. Statutory frameworks capable of anchoring such "next-generation" clauses, however, are still in their infancy.

Creators' vast public reach supplies a form of societal power, yet turning visibility into lasting associational and institutional strength demands legal clarity. Should creator collectives enjoy the immunity granted to trade unions, or be treated as professional associations subject to competition oversight? Can a European bargaining model emerge that binds platforms incorporated outside the EU? Addressing these questions, the study shows, is indispensable if collective action in the creator economy is to move from sporadic protest to formalised social dialogue. In this way the paper speaks directly to INDL-8's concern with new forms of digitally mediated worker resistance and the legal architectures that might sustain them.

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