



# True freedom of expression depends on independent, sustainable authorship

*The International Federation of Journalists thanks the Chair and the secretariat for their handling of this sensitive session of the Standing Committee.*

The International Federation of Journalists represents 600,000 journalists in 134 countries, North and South, and therefore has a keen interest in promoting conditions in which independent authorship can thrive. The IFJ believes that this consideration must inform all discussion of exceptions and limitations, whether national or supra-national.

Viewed as exceptions to copyright, which may easily be seen as a right wielded by powerful corporations largely based in the global North, the proposed exceptions and limitations are at first sight very, very tempting. Schools and libraries are worthy institutions. The IFJ acknowledges a desperate need to extend their reach and quality, not least in the global South. Why should they not have free access to their prime raw material – works of authorship?

But when we view exceptions as derogations from *authors' rights* – from *droit d'auteur* – the situation is rather more complicated. Exceptions without fair compensation reduce the funds available to authors. How, then, will we – I am a working journalist – make a living?

Authors have limited alternatives to being paid for the work they do, as it is used. They may depend on patronage. They, or their publishers, may seek commercial sponsorship – something which is already distorting the fringes of educational and medical publishing in some places. Only a few fields of authorship are likely to be satisfactorily supported by no-strings research funding, where that is available at all.

Failing these sources of funds, authorship is restricted to those with inherited wealth, and those with an axe to grind who will work for free for that reason.

Only one of these sources of income is compatible with the *independent* creation that is absolutely necessary to the expansion of knowledge and culture and its transmission through education and libraries – and research grants are, as already noted, limited in their range.

If being a widely-distributed author were to depend on patronage, sponsorship or inherited wealth, then the scope for the full and free expression of the cultures and contributions of the global South would be limited. Authors – journalists – in Latin America and in Africa, particularly, tell the IFJ, as their representative, that the development agenda needs to look to their needs as authors in the developing regions, as well as those of users.

To restate these issues (loosely) in economists' terms: exceptions without fair compensation are a legislative transfer of value from authors. Ill-thought-out exceptions without fair compensation are in effect a transfer of value from one set of corporations in the global North to another set of corporations – those corporations which skim off value by distributing works which others have written and produced, and selling advertising alongside them.

The solutions to the needs of libraries and of educational establishments everywhere lie in fair licensing by agreement. The IFJ welcomes the submission of the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations on work that is being done to smooth the path to this.

Of course, the issue of fair compensation is not entirely simple. In the instances where such compensation is routed via the intermediaries that distribute authors' works, this of course raises the issue of authors' need for fair contracts from these publishers, broadcasters and so on to ensure that compensation collected directly benefit authors. The International Federation of Journalists will be returning to this issue in this forum, and invites delegations to contact us about possible initiatives here on this matter.