



# Managing Change

Innovation and Trade Unionism in the News Industry

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...**the mobile internet** is only just beginning and  
could usher in the next “media revolution”.

# Preface

**T**he media industry is undergoing a revolutionary change. Only few actors attempt to untangle the changing relationship and deal with some important questions raised over the quality of journalism and the increasingly volatile working conditions faced by journalists. The report *Managing Change in Journalism* published by the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) attempts to answer these questions through a thorough analysis of a drastically changing media environment.

Based on the responses of a survey conducted on twenty-five EFJ affiliates in eighteen European countries, the report presents an examination of the strategies and policies of the unions with regard to the changes taking place in the news industries across Europe. Following the publication of an IFJ report *Journalism: Unions in Touch with the Future* last year (see <http://www.ifj.org/assets/banners/133/054/87da685-0cf1236.pdf>), this report provides an updated analysis on the impacts of the changes upon journalists' and their unions' work. It examines how journalists' unions and collective bargaining can play a positive role in the changing environment to secure better working conditions when more of the workforce becomes freelance. It also begs the question over the survival of journalism as a public good and overcoming the challenges faced by journalists in a time when the ubiquitous mobile telephone has handed to everyone the capacity to be an on-the-spot "reporter" of news events.

We hope this report will provide journalists and their unions a fresh inspiration to rekindle the spirit of mission and solidarity of their work.

We would like to thank all unions who have taken their precious time to respond to the survey and in particular the author of the study, Dr. Andreas Bittner, an online journalist from Germany, who provides a sharp and forward-looking analysis in this report. Last but not least, thanks to the European Commission for the financial support, without which this important project would have been difficult to implement.

Arne König, EFJ President  
*European Federation of Journalists*

Renate Schroeder  
*EFJ Co-Director*



# Introduction

## Is journalism facing a turning point?

**M**any observers consider European journalism to be at a critical point. Work intensification, a sometimes drastic reduction in staff, dramatically worse conditions for those entering the job market and an increase in atypical employment relationships (spin-offs, subcontracted work, temporary contracts, dumping wages); these are just a few indicators of the perceived decline of a profession, the subtle devaluation of an occupational image. They lead to an attack on the self-image of journalists, who see themselves not as mere multi-media content providers but as dedicated investigators and reporters who verify, filter, classify and evaluate things. It has long since become evident that “the internet”, with its high speed and intensity, is changing, if not revolutionizing, entire industries and economic sectors. The digitalization of all kinds of contents will continue to advance; the mobile internet is only just the beginning and could usher in the next “media revolution”. Production, distribution and financing models are changing. Even research and contents no longer originate exclusively from media publishers and professional journalists. Pure news has long since been a cheap commodity that is available free of charge in many places on the net.

In recent years, the effects of the financial crisis on the media industry and journalism have been much discussed. Although the situation on the shares and classifieds markets has improved significantly, as has the state of media publishers’ balance sheets, the condition of traditional journalism continues to be regarded as serious if not critical. This is true of the personal, social and economic condition of journalists, and their practical, everyday work. This can be seen in the case of young journalists who are just starting their careers—and facing increasingly poor entry-level working conditions. For many young professionals it has become more attractive to get involved within the context of media and public relations or communications services in the broadest sense. Journalism is here seen as one, rather badly paid, entry-level option.

Added to this is the distinct shift from permanent employment relationships to freelance work. Even though this process is not an exclusively “forced” one (many independent journalists, in Western Europe at least, like freelancing and do not regard themselves as “forced lancers”), it is a further mark of the change for which the traditional structures and programmes of many unions are rather inadequately equipped. This study therefore pays particular attention to the situation of freelance journalists in Europe.

## Survey and study

With the support of the European Commission, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) has initiated an ambitious, multi-stage project in order to 1. Identify best practice solutions in the industry that help to shape the rapid change in the media landscape; 2. Identify and support change processes in European journalists' unions, with a particular focus on member recruitment and 3. Define starting points for an improved European social and labour policy. In this process, emphasis must once more be placed on the social dimension of the change: payment, working conditions, training and further education, the work-life balance and lifelong learning.

The results of this EFJ survey “Managing Change - Managing Change in Journalism Innovation and Trade Union in the News Industry” have shown that most of the answers, activities and problem areas are still related to the print sector, which is also reflected in this evaluation. It is nonetheless surprising that, although the digital threat potential to the old business models has been recognized to a great extent, the digital change is not reflected in the programmes, structures and member-oriented activities of the unions.

How are European journalists' unions dealing with the change outlined? What strategies are they pursuing? What significance do collective wage agreements and negotiations still have? What role do strikes play? What does meaningful further training for the new “multitasking journalist” look like—and who pays for it? What answers do unions have to the issues of fragmentation (isolation) and work intensification? Or to the issue of competitive undercutting on the part of freelancers (and its lack of solidarity) and the shocking loss of quality that results? How can the conditions for newcomers, young professionals and freelance journalists be improved? In short, are the traditional associations and social partnerships still a means by which to confront the change?

## EFJ and managing change

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and its member unions are aware of the change and are facing up to it. The project “Managing Change in Journalism” is intended to form the first step in this — in dialogue with European colleagues, media experts and the European Commission (Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs) who support this exchange. At the same time, the project considers itself part of a series that includes the seminar “Organising Journalists — The Recruitment Challenge for European Unions” (Budapest, Hungary 2008), the seminars “Recruiting and Organising in Online Media” (Sesimbra, Portugal 2009) and “Authors' Rights in the Digital Age. A Fair Share for Journalists” (Thessaloniki, Greece 2010), along with the recommendations of the so-called IFJ Future Group “Looking Forward – Recommendations” (Cádiz 2010).

It becomes apparent here that the debate needs to concentrate much more (again) on the social dimension of change in the media industry and to contribute to better, lived-out practice and more social cohesion. This is an issue for European policy and calls for legislation providing a framework. For unions, the following questions, in particular, arise:

- Who will journalists' and media unions be unionising in future?
- Which professional and social services do (or can) they offer?
- What kind of service do members expect, since established forms of media and organisations are breaking up and the media landscape is changing rapidly?



- What remains if traditional dialogue (collective wage negotiations, collective wage debates and collective wage battles) is refused?
- Which new, high-profile kinds of activity promise success?
- How can potential conflicts between established workers and young professionals, between permanently employed and freelance journalists be identified and avoided?
- How can (European) policy, in the sense of a flexicurity strategy, ensure that atypical employment relationships (atypical workers) and freelance journalists are better protected? Should freelance journalists be regarded as “economically dependent workers” who have a right to collective negotiations?



# The Survey

## Evaluation of the questionnaire

### General information

The short questionnaire was created by a steering committee chosen for this project and answered by 25 member organisations from 19 European countries. On a purely quantitative basis, that corresponds to about 85% of EFJ members. However, the fact should not be ignored that many small organisations, and particularly those from Southern and Eastern Europe (with their specific and very fundamental problems), did not respond. Although the unions that replied vary significantly in size, level of unionisation and financial power<sup>1</sup>, one can identify several general European “dimensions of change”.

Below a concise summary of the individual answers to the list of questions will be given. (National particularities and commendable examples will be highlighted and a cautious evaluative classification attempted. The answers allow for general conclusions and provide a qualitative basis from which to start. This is a good background for discussion on the future determination of status, potential for change and concrete steps.

### Questions on membership, fees and services

Question 1 attempts to gain a differentiated picture of which journalists and “media people” are unionized by the individual EFJ members. Permanently employed journalists and photographers feature universally; most unions additionally have freelance journalists as members (important exception: Greece). Students are also welcome in most organisations (exceptions include Croatia, Greece and Spain’s FAPE); in some, the academic discipline is distinctly restricted (e.g. in Germany), in others rather less so (Denmark: almost all students). Around half of those surveyed also unionize journalists in the field of press and public relations (“marketing” is specifically named once). Some organisations explicitly mention a high proportion of retirees (Finland specified 20 percent); others also accept unemployed journalists.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, this evaluation cannot go into the sometimes considerable national differences; for example, a unitary or federal organisational structure, two-tier organisations with strong regional units, company-based or industry-wide pay systems, general legal framework conditions that permit, promote or prohibit certain forms of organisation and activities. Nonetheless, general trends quite clearly emerge.

Beyond that, the picture is very strongly differentiated. The broadest criterion is doubtless that mentioned in Switzerland: “As a media union we unionize all workers of the media industry.” However, there is a two-tier system in Switzerland; in cooperation with the other (two) unions, a so-called professional register is kept in which journalists can have themselves listed if they have been working for at least two years “for Swiss information media [and] spend at least 50% of their time on this.”

The following is an overview of additional responses that show that many unions have chosen a quite broad approach. Some unions here emphasize the “autonomy” and the “predominantly journalistic proportion” of the job: definitions which certainly leave room for discretion. The following groups of members were named:

- communications officers, media and public relations workers
- professional bloggers, for primarily journalistic work
- technical editorial staff (editorial layout, proofreading)
- programme presenters (such as hosts, music editors or newsreaders), and programme promoters (trailer and jingle production), as long as they primarily convey information based on their own selection and/or editing
- media archivists and media documentation officers, as long as they support their editorial work with their own independent research
- camera people for topical or documentary reporting, as long as they largely choose their themes themselves
- cutters, as long as they largely determine the editing sequence of topical or documentary material themselves
- editors of books
- copywriters, information graphics designers, fashion photographers
- all the employees of a media company
- web designers and content managers, as long as their work is predominantly journalistic
- “everyone who produces contents for the media environment”—writers of subtitles, ghost-writers, cartoonists, TV producers, computer game designers (Denmark)
- in Italy there are so-called collaboratori: paid journalists for whom journalism is a secondary occupation, mostly in the regional sector (with fewer member benefits and lower fees, but of whom it is expected that they observe professional journalistic standards)
- journalism professors (Belgium)
- entrepreneurs and non-professional authors if they regularly publish articles; so-called extraordinary members without voting right (Slovakia).

Some organisations purposefully limit themselves to full-time journalists, since the organisations are part of a larger association of trade unions under whose umbrella membership is possible for other media genres.

Question 1.1 shows that there are only a few member countries that do not have a scale of membership fees. Most of them charge a uniform standard fee; often a percentage of the salary

(responses ranged from 1 to 1.6 percent) up to a fixed upper limit (in Norway, for example, maximum 670 euros). Most organisations have reduced fees for students, volunteers, retirees or the unemployed. In some cases there is a two-tier fee system: a national standard fee and varying regional fees (e.g. Switzerland, Italy and Spain's FAPE). Associations additionally mentioned the possibility of passive membership (Sweden, Switzerland). In Hungary there is a discount of 25 percent if the annual fee is paid by the end of January.

It can generally be maintained that few differences are made when it comes to services (question 1.2); there are differing rules for particular groups of people (students, retirees) regarding the issue of press cards, sometimes due to the national legal position, and regarding legal protection. In some countries, press cards for full-time journalists are distinguished from membership cards (e.g. in Belgium and Finland). At some organisations, a passive membership exists with lower fees and fewer benefits. In Slovakia there are so-called extraordinary members who have neither an active nor passive right to vote.

Only one organisation, where the membership services are the same for everyone, highlights the increasing imbalance between permanently employed and freelance journalists and bemoans the significant increase in expenses for freelancers.

While a (small) number of organisations, due to specific national conditions, apply very strict criteria for membership and do not, for example, unionize freelance journalists, most are relatively open or beginning (unofficially) to open up to a broader clientele. At the same time, some are still explicitly oriented towards a strict understanding of journalism as the main occupation, whether this is associated with financial or time-related indicators. Others operate with the vague term of a "primarily journalistic form of work in the media sector". Yet others have a two-tier, differentiated model of "journalistic core members" and "other media representatives" and issue different kinds of press and membership cards. Quite a number of organisations are starting to open up to a broader "media-related" and "journalistic" group of people, while making careful distinctions here when it comes to fees and benefits.

Even though an increasing opening up and differentiation can be seen, or assumed, to be a growing trend, aspects of solidarity (or, perhaps we should say, uniformity) still prevail. To put it another way: while the market, occupational image and membership are seeing an increasing divergence and fragmentation, and while the demands and topics for members and unions are becoming more and more complex, organisational change may be lagging behind. Many organisations make no differentiation in either services or membership fees. Already now this is leading to a tension between solidarity and fair fees. Not only in companies but also in unions, there are debates about permanently employed versus freelance journalists, and standard fees versus reductions.

A first step in the future would be to collect statistical member data and make more intensive investigations into the composition of members and of the industry (known as "mapping"). The resulting knowledge on the structure of the organisation could lead to a more differentiated target group orientation (relating to services, the distribution of information and for more successful campaigns). A diversity of membership that covers all the relevant journalistic media sectors would seem positive here.

Only one of the surveyed EFJ members found the question as to services completely "inappropriate" and pleaded for a "pure" union nature, in other words for protecting "exclusively the material and moral interests of members". Most organisations find themselves on a continuum between

a union and a professional association with a strong service-providing nature. It can be assumed that, with the change in membership composition and media landscape, the professional association aspect will increase. A succinct profile and a clear self-image (whether as union and/or professional association), supported by broad membership, should be developed.

A differentiation in fees, benefits and services offered is likely to be inevitable in the future, in the opinion of this study's author, if friction between the (increasingly diverse) members is to be avoided. The demographic aspect also plays a role. An internal differentiation of membership is necessary to the extent that the core area of wage negotiations takes a back seat. Otherwise there is the risk that specialized associations (e.g. for photographers, freelancers or other sectors) with a focused profile will be more successful in luring members away than is currently the case.

In conclusion, a reference to two aspects that are further developed in the questions of section 3: member recruitment and support for new members. While in recruitment, sporadic, untargeted or traditional activities often prevail, there is frequently a lack of any clear strategy or targeted services for new members.

## **The status of the journalist, perception of the journalist occupation, permanent employees and freelancers**

In question 2.1 a pessimistic undertone in relation to status and the expected developments is to be detected overall and across all questionnaires and country borders. There was hardly a filled-out questionnaire without comments on the “devaluation of the profession” which is linked to several criteria / dimensions:

- A (continuing) reduction in staff in connection with high work intensification, additional (multimedia and cross-media) tasks, higher demands in terms of contents and technology which, alongside personal health consequences, frequently lead to an arbitrariness of the product, a loss of quality and a loss of diversity of opinion. The same amount of work or more is done by fewer permanently employed journalists. Journalists are seen as a cost factor; the number of core workers is reduced. The gaps that arise are at the expense of quality and of the remaining employed journalists whose workload and “entrepreneurial” responsibility increases. The rest is carried out by freelancers who regrettably allow themselves or are simply forced to be driven by competitive undercutting.
- In publishing houses and media companies an erosion of the (hard won) salary and social standards can be observed. Stagnating incomes, fewer benefits, financial losses—especially among young professionals and those starting a career, but also in the benefits for long-term employees. Unpaid overtime is an aspect that is often mentioned. In some cases it is suggested that older colleagues tend towards preservation of their vested rights and low levels of commitment; here, too, there is the danger of division and a loss of solidarity. Some see the danger that, along with the young journalists, those with less of a fighting spirit could be joining the companies.
- New kinds of cooperation and sometimes “bizarre” legal constructs lead to a new lack of clarity and unequal treatment within the same company. Through outsourcing and subcontracted work, the number of “mobilisable” staff is reduced.
- A rather indistinct picture presents itself when it comes to contracts and job descriptions which, in some countries, are written in a more “general” style in order for journalists to be deployed more widely and to be able to switch tasks more quickly. In addition, there are

attempts to erode collective wage structures, for instance by trying to equate journalists with other media workers or, even more generally, with the remaining professional groups in media companies (including, for example, those in business administration or in the technical department).

- In the online sector, the differences between creative and technical activities are being levelled out. The attempt to change the material bases by adjusting the job description is evaluated in different ways, however; some believe that it can be prevented at the level of the job description; others consider the problem not to be one of definitions but of a lack of appreciation.

From the point of view of the unions, the reduction in “journalistic core clientele” is a serious problem. The old structures of solidarity and the commitment that could be taken for granted are crumbling: through spin-offs, dismissals, subcontracted work and atypical employment relationships, the core workforce (in other words, the traditionally unionized members) is being eroded away. Moreover, individual member organisations point out specific regional developments:

- Freelance journalists in regional reporting are paid very little; “they are treated like slaves” (Belgium). They put up with this in the hope of getting a permanent position.
- Many freelancers cannot live off their journalistic work alone and look for additional jobs, particularly in the PR field.
- Digitalization has turned journalists into mere “sitting editors” that stare at their computer screens (France). The “polyvalent” way of working (multimedia) is seen by many as an opportunity, but by others as an additional burden. (Question 5.1 goes into more detail about training aspects and collective wage agreements.)
- In many countries, the number of unemployed journalists is increasing (explicitly mentioned: Hungary, Spain).
- However, the significant change for the worse in the legal situation, especially for freelance journalists is mentioned rather seldom. This applies especially to total buy-out contracts (TBO) and particularly to photojournalists.

In conclusion, the level of performance required of journalists has never been higher: never before has so much information from more and more channels needed to be sifted, verified, processed and edited for the readers, listeners, viewers and users. The important has to be differentiated from the unimportant, PR deceptions distinguished from the facts. Journalists need to understand the complex processes in the economy, politics, culture and the environment, process the information and, not only that, they are also expected to convey it in a service-oriented, multimedia way. They have to utilize numerous channels and keep an eye on new formats and platforms. All of this must be done in a multi-tasking, cross-media fashion and without neglecting the increasingly complex aspects relating to press law and rights of expression.

In question 2.2 the focus was on activities for new members, but also on activities, events and networking options for all members. First, it should be noted that very few organisations offer special services or support for new members. This is all the more surprising, since much thought goes into recruitment and membership criteria. Once the new members have been recruited, far too little effort is made to introduce them to the work and topics of the union. Since they are often young journalists, mentoring programmes (such as in Germany, for example) would seem to be a valuable starting point. Member surveys are also recommended as a controlling tool.



A lot of organisations make large quantities of information available on the internet and via member magazines, leaflets, handbooks, etc., in the hope that they will reach their target audience, be noticed and lead to the appropriate responses.

Many unions rely on their “messages” and information somehow being found, accessed or requested (pull factor). A lot of organisations make large quantities of information available on the internet and via member magazines, leaflets, handbooks, etc., in the hope that they will reach their target audience, be noticed and lead to the appropriate responses (joining or becoming committed). Target-group oriented activities with personal (encouraging) contacts are rare, however. Even target-group specific, relevant information that could be provided easily and at low cost by digital means (newsletters, thematic blogs, RSS feed –with push factor!) are only used very seldom. (In Finland they are currently considering digitalizing welcome information.) Perhaps the most common way of recruiting new members that is mentioned is visits to universities and journalism schools. Almost all organisations agree that only addressing people in person, preferably at the company, promises lasting success.

The “traditional” range of regional and national conferences, regular get-togethers (at a local level), training events (new media, languages, setting up a business, self-organisation, etc.) and seminars, some of which are organised externally, is well developed in many unions. Social media and platforms for digital networking, forums for sharing professional information or even exchanges for jobs hardly feature, however. To put it another way: when it comes to digital, target-group specific services, most unions have a lot of catching up to do.

Opinions on the future development of the relationship between freelance and permanently employed journalists vary (question 2.3). As mentioned above, there are distinct, pessimistic assessments and concrete negative findings that indicate a “devaluation of the profession” and the occupational image. This applies to the concrete, material working conditions, the social environment, the quality standards, the multiplicity of media forms and the blurred boundary to PR—along with the associated problem of credibility.

The view that the number and proportion of freelance journalists will increase is almost unanimous. In those organisations in which freelance journalists can be members, they make up a proportion of between 10 and 65 percent across Europe. There are, however, considerable differences in individual countries. While the proportion of freelance journalists particularly in Nordic countries is (still) relatively low, it is especially high in Central Europe: often over 60 percent. Specific figures are frequently lacking; here, too, better internal statistics would be desirable. The increase in freelance journalists is seen as a direct result of the reduction in staff: permanently employed journalists become freelancers or have to continue their previous work on a freelance basis (“forced lancers”). Reference is often made to the fact that the gaps in editorial departments are only partly filled by freelance journalists.

The issue of the effects of the universally perceived devaluation of the profession and of the cuts and declining editorial budgets on the relationship between the two groups, permanently employed and freelance journalists, is, however, addressed too little. Just a few comments point towards a (feared) move away from solidarity: between permanent employees and freelancers, among freelancers themselves or even between different sectors or media genres. In Italy, where the proportions of permanently employed and freelance journalists are probably equal by now, it is even feared that there will be a “clash” between the two groups. Many are still unsure about future developments. Some see the relationship as a positive one, however.

In the future, one of the greatest challenges for unions is likely to consist in creating organisational structures and services that are useful to both freelance and permanently employed journalists—ones that are accepted by both interest groups “under one umbrella”. This particularly applies to the aspects of “collective wages” and “legal protection and service packages”, the significance of which is fundamentally different for these two groups. This is also true of the individually perceived relationship between cost and benefit (or between membership fees and the benefits claimed).

## **Membership criteria, member recruitment, advantages for members**

When it comes to membership criteria (question 3.1), it can be observed that only very few organisations have changed theirs in the recent past, nor do they plan to do so in the future. This seems somewhat contradictory to the very broad spread depicted above. Overall, two extremes of the “membership spectrum” can be assumed:

- Some unions are now so broadly based that the criteria could hardly be expanded in any meaningful way.
- Others behave extremely restrictively (with varied motivations) and do not plan to open up this “closed shop” any further.

Many organisations refer to the overriding criterion of journalism being the “main occupation”. This is interpreted in terms of either time (e.g. 50 percent of the working time) or money (e.g. at least 50 percent of the income). Some unions are considering lowering this “main occupation” percentage from 66 to 50 percent (UK). Belgium also permits those for whom journalism is a secondary occupation, but no “volunteers”. Denmark is relaxing its criterion for student membership and considering introducing a special section for the middle management. Greece is thinking about increasing the age for joining. A series of organisations intends to address the sectors of “online” and “PR” in more depth in the future. Hungary has a relatively broad range of criteria, but refers to its tried and tested surety system.

Member recruitment (question 3.2) is handled in a number of ways. Some organisations, especially those in Scandinavian countries, have such a high level of unionization (significantly more than 90 percent) that highly targeted campaigns for particular sectors are held. Some associations take a very broad approach. Others do not have the capacities or do not make member recruitment a high priority.

Those organisations that carry out active member recruitment refer, above all, to addressing people in person, through works councils or colleagues within the media companies. Some organisations do this regularly, e.g. with an annual campaign. Most of the time, member recruitment depends on the personal commitment of individuals. Some organisations offer low-threshold services (regular get-togethers, conferences, and mentoring programmes) where potential members can likewise be approached in person. Events and cooperation with universities, journalism schools and other educational institutions are also specifically sought in order to reach those entering the job market.

In addition to this are member magazines and websites. Some, such as the NUJ in Great Britain and the NVJ in the Netherlands, have digital services with a high profile across the entire media sector, which facilitates targeted advertising activities. The NVJ considers itself strong in the field of social media and has its own community. The NUJ additionally mentions its own, very popular mailing lists. A few organisations refer to “trial memberships” and discount campaigns. Members, who are allowed to bring non-members to events free of charge as guests was mentioned once.

Besides acquiring new members, however, member retention should also not be neglected, although this topic was not covered by the questionnaire.

Finally, the demographic dimension should not be forgotten: some organisations seem to have a disproportionate number of older members.

Many, but not all, member organisations offer training and seminars (question 3.3). The following overall categories can be distinguished:

- committee training for works councils and office-holders; these are offered by most organisations
- seminars and events that relate to professional aspects of the journalist profession, with a broad range covering interview training, text training, new media courses, photography, copyright and even journalists in crisis regions
- special services for freelancers are increasingly on offer, such as: starting up a business, office organisation, tax issues, collection, payment calculations, etc.
- special services for young people were also mentioned: mentoring programmes, checklists for those starting a career (regarding practical training, educational institutions, etc.)
- some organisations additionally offer personality training courses (negotiation training, the role of a presenter, stress management, etc.); language courses are more on the rare side.

While some unions or associations carry out courses themselves or hire individual consultants, others have their own academies (training establishments) or cooperate with educational institutions. While some countries with a broad range of services (Denmark, DJV in Germany) are widely represented, others refer to their union umbrella organisation (dju in ver.di in Germany, GPA in Austria).



While Eastern European organisations barely have the money for educational activities, and are sometimes grateful for appropriate EFJ services, some unions simply refer to existing handbooks. In Spain, a series of online courses is planned. For a year now, the DJV in Germany has been putting on very successful webinars (see <http://www.journalistenwebinar.de>). These are one to two-hour seminars on the Web, sometimes even in the form of video conferences. Such events are a cost-efficient, time-saving training option that is worthwhile also for small groups.

Additional advantages: alongside the typical core activities such as legal advice and general professional representation, there are also numerous responses regarding characteristic benefits for particular countries: free public transportation (Belgium), advance financing for legal disputes, special “trainee press cards”, membership fee that covers special insurance services including travel insurance (also abroad), reduced price offers via their own service subsidiaries (special discounts for car hire, mobile phone and internet rates, insurance), holiday homes and other leisure facilities.

## Pay scales, collective negotiations, strikes

In many countries, the context of and approach to collective negotiations is changing (question 4.1). This is also due to the fact that the existing “classical” sectors (daily newspapers, magazines, public and private radio and agencies) are increasingly disappearing. Print publishing houses are turning into media publishers. The causes of this are, above all, technological. The negotiations are conducted more rigorously and often take up a lot of time; in some cases they even last years. (In Switzerland for the past six years, in Greece for the past two, with no results; in Italy an agreement was found after four years.)

It is increasingly the case that no negotiations are held at all: that means the old contracts are updated. There is a distinct trend towards an attempt to abandon industry-wide agreements, in favour of company-based pay systems. Furthermore, in Eastern European countries and for freelance journalists all over Europe, company-wide agreements are being replaced by individual contracts. In general, attempts to weaken existing contracts to the disadvantage of journalists can be observed. This also includes the elimination of concessions in the form of Christmas bonuses or holiday pay. Occasionally, the guarantee of no compulsory redundancies is made in return. Nonetheless, open breaches of contracts, which are then justified by a difficult financial situation, are on the increase. The situation for the younger generation of journalists, who are expected to work under generally worsened conditions, is becoming particularly critical.

In Central European countries, in particular, unions are lacking a social partner since the publishers do not join the respective associations or do not unionize themselves as a collective bargaining



party, such as in Hungary. “We want to dance, but we find no partner” (Slovenia). Or all the negotiations come to a standstill because the employers’ side refuses to participate. “We have a partner, but we still can’t dance” (Croatia).

It can generally be observed that even in countries with (previously) well-defined social partnerships and a tradition of collective negotiations, the acceptance of collective wage agreements and negotiation options is declining. There is a multitude of ways of evading collective wage agreements: publishing companies leave employers’ associations, opt out of the collective bargaining community and thereby avoid the effects of future collective negotiations. The tendency towards spin-offs, outsourcing, sub-contracted work, pooling and temporary contracts is increasing significantly (in German private radio

around 60 percent of employment contracts are now apparently temporary).

In many countries, strikes are still seen as an instrument, as a last resort—and one that is implemented, but less frequently and less systematically than in the past. Some unions emphasize the fundamental right to strike, but see its practical implementation as having been weakened by new technologies and forms of organisation: thanks to the internet, heads of departments, pre-produced articles, news agencies and agency materials—with the support of outsourced units and freelancers—newspapers still get published. A difference (in quantity) is often not perceived by the readers. The more publishing houses are turning into media publishers, the harder it is to successfully organise classical industrial action (in the sense of a production stop).

In almost all member countries union leaders are thinking about new forms of disputes and creative measures that could replace strikes: protest activities with public appeal, “lunch breaks protests”, staging warning strikes and further activities (campaign films, flash mobs), partly using methods of “guerrilla marketing” and incorporating social media (Facebook, Twitter) or using videos (specific YouTube channels). Added to this are testimonials from celebrities who also point out the societal role of journalism (journalism as a public good). Many of these new approaches are characterised by the fact that they are intended to produce public images, use social media and thereby attempt to create wider publicity, in other words, to include the public. This often occurs in combination with other events, such as protests on World Press Freedom Day. Another possibility is found in the form of coordinated activities with journalists, (commercial) employees of publishing houses and printers.

However, the unions are increasingly asking themselves how journalists can be motivated at all. Many of them, mostly older ones, are pursuing a strategy of preserving their vested rights. Many, in this case mostly the younger ones, are not familiar with collective actions of solidarity. Also in the face of the increasing divergence and fragmentation of the journalist occupation, it is becoming more difficult to find a point of common ground (for joint activities). In Italy, the media (print and television) are legally obliged to publish notifications and information from unions; this is considered a good instrument.

This list shows that European journalists' unions should concentrate more in future on exchanging ideas about imaginative and innovative activities in order to counteract the increasing ineffectiveness of classical industrial action measures. At the same time, it seems sensible to create a joint, pan-European database on pay scale conditions and negotiation results. This could be set in motion by the EFJ.

From question 4.2 it is evident that, if online journalists are covered by collective agreement regulations at all, this is generally only the case at (large) media publishers. Here the same regulations apply to all staff. In Germany this also applies to a small number of commercial radio stations and institutions governed by public law. Entire online units are often spun off, however, or organised as subcontractors. They are founded as independent IT or marketing departments. In general, that means no collective agreement regulations, lower pay and longer, barely regulated working times. Coupled with the significantly worse conditions in terms of financial and employment-law aspects, this is often additionally an issue of status for those affected. Online journalists are (still) often regarded as second class journalists who post on the internet texts that have been produced by third parties, instead of giving their own independent company input.

In almost all member countries, freelance journalists are not included in collective wage agreements or indeed covered by any kind of regulations. In Italy, where freelancers are supposed to be included in the agreements, the employers' side refused to enter into discussions on the matter. In some states, on the other hand, this would be seen as a violation of competition law regulations since freelance journalists are fundamentally regarded as (small) business owners, for whom there can be no minimum fees and who have to negotiate individual contracts. In this regard, political decision-makers often overlook the asymmetrical negotiating position of freelancers, since they are effectively on their own as they face the large media publishers. As a matter of fact, freelance journalists are often too fragmented and too concerned with earning a living to be able to be unionized effectively. The most promising concept here would seem to be lobby activities with a broader approach, regarding copyright (Germany, general remuneration rules) or against wage dumping, for example.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in some member countries there is no "freelance culture" to date, or this is only just slowly developing. In addition, there are problems of classification, since para-journalistic and pseudo-journalistic forms are on the increase, sometimes in contexts that are entirely without payment and not safeguarded. Blogging journalists, journalism-related bloggers, citizen journalists, amateur journalists, data journalists, aggregators, commentators, forum operators, hobby journalists, reader reporters, communities... the field is becoming increasingly complicated. There are now business models (Demand Media, Suite 101) which are based on merely producing search-engine compatible content. The forms in which discount journalism, which is undermining quality journalism, manifests itself are numerous. Distinguishing them from "true freelance" journalists is no longer easy.

## Training for the changing media landscape

One of the aims of question 5.1 is to find out whether further education and training for the new digital challenge is, firstly, stipulated in the collective wage agreement and, secondly, funded and supported by the employer. Most of the time, this is nothing more than a pipe dream. It is noticeable that a number of unions do not answer this question in the study at all. Very generalised phrasing is used, for instance: "Every member should have the necessary training for his/her job, as well as recurrent further training." Or: "Of course journalists must be prepared to deal

efficiently with all the new information sources, and they must be trained with regard to all the new media that use their work, in order to be able, for example, to enforce their author's rights."

In some, though not many, countries, training is indeed offered and is negotiated or determined together with the employers. This year, for example, the Italian journalists' association (FNSI) has negotiated several company-based agreements in which further training for journalists is regulated as an important component. In Norway, training of up to two weeks is regulated by contract, supplemented by activities from the union's own educational institute. In Finland there are so-called TAKO days; these are two paid days of training per year. Other than that, a number of positive examples are mentioned but only with individual, mostly large, media publishers. In general, training is done "on the job". In the case of younger employees, it is assumed that they have a wide range of digital skills, anyway, or will acquire them of their own accord.

In some cases it is a question of classification: Where does journalistic activity end and technical work begin? Where do you draw the line between supplying text and carrying out graphical tasks? Can the use of social media be expected and assumed nowadays? It is also disputed as to whether journalists should (or must) be trained comprehensively in future, or whether the focus should rather be on specializations in editorial departments.

The unions see a multifaceted need for advanced training with regard to what are still known as "new media". (Question 5.2) Not all are able to name these specifically and avoid it by using vague wording (see above). A more extensive survey in connection with an analysis of the current state would be helpful. The questionnaire shows that even the terms and concepts are used imprecisely: "tri-media", "multimedia", "cross-media", "social media", "the internet" and, more generally still, "online", are used indiscriminately. Perhaps it is necessary (for the unions more than on the part of the publishers) to assert the perception that the "new media" are not very new anymore (the internet has existed for around 20 years and online journalism for about ten). In any case, the internet presence of journalists' unions and their use of "new" and social media often reveal that these instruments are still not much incorporated into recruiting, informing and retaining customers. The digital potential of networking and appealing to specific target groups is also barely tapped. So far, the significant changes to the media landscape regarding journalism, specific competences and qualifications, responsibilities and working relationships (keyword: newsroom) have not been adequately clarified. A study of this kind could be coordinated by the EFJ, which could then issue corresponding recommendations.

From the point of view of the employer, it is justifiable to expect that targeted staff development (in the editorial sector) would also include well-planned training and further education. This should go significantly beyond the well-known buzzwords of "life-long learning".

## Freelance journalists

Freelancers (forced lancers, entrepreneurial journalists) present a clientele that is not yet in the focus of many European journalists' unions. That is, if freelancers are welcome as members at all. In the future, unions will be faced with the question as to how to deal with these (potential) members and in what form binding fees and other agreements related to employment law can be implemented. In the question as to a protection for freelance journalists (question 6.1) that is analogous to that of their permanently employed colleagues, there are many aspirations and good wishes, but relatively few concrete ideas. The responses were rather sparse.



The main problem is, and will remain, the legal status of freelancers: as a general rule, they are seen exclusively as small business owners on the free market or as being self-employed, meaning that union-like or collective-agreement-like activities would conflict with the applicable laws: this is particularly the case with competition legislation and the aspect of “minimum fees”. As a result, the unions are unable to solve many problems, or indeed even address them directly, as long as there is no corresponding “labour legislation for freelancers”.

This would first have to be created by the national legislature or the EU, analogous to the traditional “typical” employment relationships. At this point, some organisations

explicitly refer to their long-term lobbying efforts. A possible law should provide for specific rights for so-called freelance committees or freelance councils within companies, facilitate elections for freelance works councils or their integration into existing structures and create explicit contact people or authorities for freelancers.

The most important exception is the Loi Cressard in France and, although in a significantly weakened form, the status of “employee-like self-employed persons” in Germany. In some countries (especially the Netherlands) views against minimum fees are expressed, since these minimum requirements could develop into the maximum achievable level over time. In Austria, it has proven very successful that works councils have also campaigned in the interests of freelance journalists; indeed, by the “circuitous route” of social security contributions, permanent contracts were even achieved.

After all, in addition to the payment aspect, there are also numerous disadvantages for freelancers in the area of social security; some unions try to compensate this by means of additional services and “insurance benefits” (packages). The question as to the numerical ratio of permanently employed journalists to freelancers was not explicitly posed; the important demographic change likewise did not feature. Nonetheless, it can be noted (or surmised) that the proportion of freelancers is steadily growing—and makes up considerably more than 25 percent, even up to about 60 percent, in some member countries. It seems as though having a permanent contract will become rather atypical, or untypical, for journalists in the future. What conclusions do EFJ member organisations draw from this? How are they adapting themselves and their range of services to this structural change? This simultaneously brings us to the last sub-question (question 6.2): here the intention was to find out what changes the EFJ members are planning in order to adapt or improve their range of services in the face of the anticipated significant increase in freelance journalists, both on the market and among the union members. (It is disappointing that more than half of the questionnaires returned did not contain any usable answers on precisely this aspect.)

The difficulties (especially the lack of legal status) have been discussed above. An additional challenge is undoubtedly the particular work situation of freelancers, their isolation along with the

simultaneously untypical and very individual working conditions, working hours, etc. This makes them considerably more difficult to unionise than their permanently employed journalist colleagues. Moreover, the younger journalists often have a different self-image. They see themselves as members of a “digital avant-garde” who can relate little to the, from their point of view, old-fashioned unions and the principles of solidarity and collegiality. This makes the recruiting process more difficult.

The number of (partly) very badly paid and even worse protected freelancers with varying statuses is increasing. An oversaturation of the market is undoubtedly due in part to the almost explosive increase in university-based and private training courses in the field of journalism, public relations and communication. Aspirants, interns and graduates crowd onto an employment market this is already dominated by the side of demand. Added to this is the trend that many young people want to do “something with media”, without themselves differentiating (or understanding) where the lines are drawn between journalism, public relations or forms of pure entertainment.

If anything, unions are indicating that they want to change their structures, procedures and services in order to improve their work for freelance journalists. Indeed, the organisational structures and communication channels for freelancers (even regarding opening times) need to be better adapted in future. Improved social counselling and legal advice need to be accompanied by the establishment of appropriate full-time capacities. A number of EFJ members point out that the appropriate departments and (voluntary) committees (right up to the board of directors) need to open up more to freelance journalists. Alongside professional groups and committees, as well as national and regional freelance committees (recently founded in Italy, for example), networking with all sectors and with permanently employed journalists must not be neglected. Even if permanently employed editors do not have direct access to the “pot of money” for freelance colleagues, there is still a direct mutual dependence regarding budgets and the size of payments.

As long as freelancers have no legally recognised status, authors’ rights and contract law, in particular, appear to provide a point of leverage. Also mentioned are ongoing lobbying, monitoring and specific legal activities in the following fields: copyright, payment provisions, contractual arrangements, multiple use, TBO (total buyouts) and “right grabbing”.

To put it another way: as long as there are no legal starting points and no possibility of direct (collective) negotiations, the empowerment of freelance journalists is an important area of activity. Prompt information, better representation, good legal protection, implementation of copyright: in Germany, following tough negotiations lasting six years, the two unions have fought out so-called general payment provisions; so far these only apply to freelance journalists of the written word at daily newspapers. For photo and magazine journalists there are still no provisions in this area.

Added to this are general “competition information”, a permanent transfer of knowledge, and seminars, which are all intended to put freelance journalists in a position to arrange their concrete working and market environment as favourably as possible. In this context, a national forum for photographers is to be set up in the UK, for example, in the future. Worthy of imitation is also undoubtedly the Norwegian fee calculator for freelancers (PDF presentation available on the internet under the link: <http://bit.ly/j4Xlxa>), an offer that is all the more remarkable since only around 10 percent of all journalists in Norway work on a freelance basis.

The extent to which such services are utilised by freelancers with resulting (business) success is often not known. An evaluation (or “impact assessment”) would certainly be helpful here, from which concrete points of reference for best practice solutions could be derived and then shared at a European level. As with many other activities, publications and internet services, the style of merely offering something (push services) should be supplemented by evaluations and dialogic formats. Analogous to the technical possibilities (tagging filters) and the increasing divergence and fragmentation, the services will need to be tailored more precisely to the target groups in the future. For example, “Freelancers’ Day”. Since already almost 50 percent of the members in some unions are “freelancers” it is possibly not sufficient to produce one single freelancers’ newsletter or offer generalized freelancer services. The good, old handbooks likewise only serve their purpose up to a point in a rapidly changing media landscape.

In the face of the growing number of freelance journalists (as members), individual counselling (often free of charge) is surely becoming less feasible. At the same time, it is difficult to gather together this divergent, fragmented, geographically scattered group of freelancers (with low time and travel budgets) in one location. Target-group oriented digital services are therefore particularly attractive options, such as a freelancer blog, specific Facebook and Twitter services, mailing lists, forums, blogger conferences, Bar Camps and webinars. An interesting solution for freelancers that goes beyond digital networking and specific event formats can now be found more frequently in metropolitan areas: so-called co-working spaces.

How to deal with the new model of the entrepreneurial journalist and the accompanying strategies of self-marketing and branding in the attention economy? What kinds of services need to be conceptualized? Which networking strategies and forms of cooperation are meaningful? Which fundamental journalistic qualifications and virtues and which new technical and cross-media skills are required on the market? What about new platforms (smartphones, iPad) and new journalistic forms (audio slide shows, podcasts, live blogging, multimedia storytelling)? Completely new areas of activity for unions will open up here in the future.

## **Journalism as a public good!**

Particularly due to the internet, a free-of-charge culture has found its way in. In the digital journalistic era there are, to quote Oscar Wilde, many people “who know the price of everything and the value of nothing”.

Alongside the debate as to the value of the work, the typical union advocacy for appropriate remuneration and fees, concrete working conditions and issues of training and further education, unions must, in future, appeal to the public far more strongly. They must get into dialogue with their readers, listeners, viewers or users. Here the questions are as to the “printed word” as a cultural asset, to the superior societal value of journalism as a whole, its contribution to cultural diversity, to the plurality of opinions and to democracy. In the future, unions need to stand up not only for individual journalists (whether they be permanently employed or freelance, young or old, analogue or digital) but also, at the same time, for journalism itself.



# EFJ Questionnaire

## Managing Change in Journalism: Innovation and Trade Unionism in the News Industry

### 1. What types of media workers do you organise?

- employed journalists
- freelance journalists
- photographers
- students
- other, please name (PR, content managers, information workers, professional bloggers etc.)

1.1 Are there differences for members with regard to union fees?

1.2 Are there differences for members with regard to union services?

### 2. Status and Perception of Members

2.1 Journalists rights are increasingly undermined in the work place as employers seek to reduce their professional status, for example journalists are often described as content managers or information workers. Please describe if and how this process is affecting your members.

2.2 What does your union offer to help journalists feel part of professional journalists' community, for example does your union offer an introduction for new members?

2.3 How do you see the future relationship between freelances and employed journalists?

### 3. Recruitment Policy

3.1 Have your membership criteria been changed recently or is your union discussing possible changes? If so, what are / will be the changes?

3.2 Recruitment strategy: What does your union do to attract new members? How does your union identify potential members? When identified, how do you reach them?

3.3 Do you provide any training/workshops for your members? If so, what kind of trainings/workshops is in demand/most attractive to your members? What other services or benefits does your union offer?

#### **4. Collective Bargaining/Agreements**

- 4.1 What difficulties does your union face regarding collective bargaining and its implementation? What role will strike play in the future? Are there alternatives to traditional strikes discussed in your union?
- 4.2 Are online journalist and/or freelancers covered in the same agreement or another? Please give concrete examples

#### **5. Training**

- 5.1 Are there any provisions either through collective agreements or other instruments to guarantee training for journalists in a changing media landscape?
- 5.2 What are your demands regarding training in a converging media landscape?

#### **6. Freelances**

- 6.1 How can unions provide equivalent protection to their freelancers as to their employed members?
- 6.2 Is your union considering or changing its traditional tasks in order to better service its increasing freelance members? Please link to specific projects on your website .

# EFJ Member Unions and Associations who responded to the survey

01	Belgium (1)	VVJ	Vlaamse Vereniging van Journalisten
02	Belgium (2)	AGJPB	Association générale des journalistes professionnels de Belgique
03	Denmark	DJ	Dansk Journalistforbund
04	Germany (1)	DJV	Deutscher Journalisten-Verband
05	Germany (2)	dju	dju in ver.di
06	Finland	SJL	Finnish Union of Journalists
07	France	SNJ-CGT	Syndicat national des journalistes CGT
08	Greece (1)	ESIEMTH	Journalists' Union of Macedonia and Thrace Daily Newspapers
09	Greece (2)	PEPU	Periodical and Electronic Press Union
10	Great Britain and Ireland	NUJ	National Union of Journalists
11	Italy	FNSI	Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana
12	Croatia	TUCJ	Trade Union of Croatian Journalists
13	Netherlands	NVJ	Nederlandse Vereniging van Journalisten
14	Norway	NJ	Norsk Journalistlag
15	Austria	GPA-djp	Gewerkschaft Druck, Journalismus, Papier GPA-DJP
16	Sweden	SJF	Swedish Union of Journalists
17	Switzerland (1)	syndicom	syndicom-le syndicat des médias et de la communication
18	Switzerland (2)	Impressum	Impressum
19	Slovakia	SSJ	Slovensky Syndikat Novinarov
20	Spain (1)	FAPE	Federación de Asociaciones de la Prensa Española
21	Spain (2)	CCOO	Federación de Comunicación y Transporte de CC.OO
22	Hungary	MUOSZ	Association of Hungarian Journalists
23	Cyprus (1)		Union of Cyprus Journalists
24	Cyprus (2)		Union of Press Workers (Basin-Sen)
25	Lithuania	LUJ	Lithuanian Union of Journalists

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## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Survey on managing change of EFJ member unions:** A finalised version will be circulated to member unions and discussed at the upcoming Annual Meeting in June in Belgrade. Recommendations for member unions will be discussed afterwards.
2. **UNI-MEI/EFJ mapping pilot project:** EFJ member unions will be informed about development and be consulted regarding the content and procedure. The main objective of the project is to identify major changes in the media and journalism industry in terms of activities, responsibilities and working relations. Based on the findings, it will enable the EFJ to develop concrete actions/recommendations for member unions in terms of recruitment and organisation in the media and journalism sector.
3. **Advocacy on notion of public remit and journalism as a public good:** In collaboration with employers and relevant civil society groups and with the public: common grounds with other media organisations/employers are quality, importance of information services over pure entertainment and support for editorial work over infrastructure.
4. **Strong authors' rights:** information awareness among journalists, authors' and unions are increasingly important. EFJ affiliates need to tackle the risks concerning mandatory licence systems, which provide low remuneration and have negative impact on traditional wage systems. Alternative options such as extended collective licence should be considered.
5. **Freelances' remuneration:** Innovative examples regarding fees of freelances such as calculators should be further explored in order to avoid conflicts with competition laws, in particular by the Freelance Expert Group (see <http://europe.ifj.org/assets/docs/152/183/7100298-e6c76b7.pdf>)
6. **Training for journalists:** provided by unions, in particular for freelances, is essential for the credibility and professionalism of unions, to reach out to members as well as to non-members. Unions should also get the right for further training on collective agreements.
7. **Collective agreements** should be inclusive of all media workers and all forms of journalism in order to maintain the professional status of journalists.
8. **Industrial actions** need to include freelances or be carried out on behalf of freelances as well, in order to have a wider impact.
9. **Freelances' rights and improvement of precarious working conditions:** Lobbying for legislation for unions' collective bargaining rights on behalf of freelance journalists at national, European and International level.
10. **Transnational coordination** between mother media company and its subsidiaries in different countries (CEE): Exchange information on working conditions of staff and freelance journalists working in the same company.
11. Clear strategy on **recruitment** and retention of members is needed, i.e. target groups, union structures, presence on social media, precarious workers. Focus on young journalists and students. Encourage a *diverse* community in recruitment.





The **European Federation of Journalists**, a regional organisation of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation. It is an European Industry Federation and a member of the ETUC.

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