Towards our own digital revolution

There could be no more important time for IFJ affiliates to discuss the future of our unions and work together to build professional and worker solidarity.

Because journalism faces an unprecedented threat.

New technologies which offered such opportunities to enhance journalism and for an extension of democratic rights and freedoms are instead being used by greedy employers to cut costs and undermine quality journalism or controlled by governments.

Citizens rights to a diverse and pluralistic media are being denied by an increasing concentration of media ownership.

Labour rights won over generations are under threat from corporations and platforms who pressure governments to deregulate making work ever more precarious and weakening social protections.

Journalists are increasingly freelance – not by choice – but forced in to non-contract and precarious work.

Young journalists starting out, determined to get their first break, work not for low wages but for no wages, cruelly exploited by an industry which boasts some of the world’s largest and most profitable companies.

Laws designed to combat terrorism or hate speech are increasingly used by ever more antidemocratic governments to censor or close down media, jail journalists and silence independent reporting.

Ethical journalism has rarely been under such sustained pressure. And is it any wonder when commercial or political gain are more important than the truth and accuracy that public trust in journalism is failing.

Despite these challenges our unions demonstrate week in week out that they can win for workers. From saving jobs to new collective agreements, from winning equal pay to addressing issues around job security, working hours, discrimination and authors and freelance rights, col-

Overview
lective action deliver real benefits. But all of this is only possible as a result of building stronger unions. And, as work becomes more precarious, more workers are forced into non-contract labour and as media companies become more powerful and more global our rights are increasingly under threat.

We are living through a period of profound and rapid technological change.

The phone each of us carries is millions of times more powerful than the combined processing power of the computers NASA used to put a man on the moon just over 4 decades ago. We take for granted instant access to information and content in a way that was inconceivable 30 years ago. Digital technologies are driving changes in every aspect of our daily lives – from the way we shop to how we pay bills or keep in touch with friends and families.

This technological revolution is changing the way we work.

Such change has the potential for good and bad, to improve the world of work or undermine it, to improve and democratise communication or to place it ever further in the hands of those who see information as merely a commodity to be bought and sold.

And just as with every other industrial revolution workers cannot afford to be passive recipients of such change but must develop our collective strength to be able to help shape the future.

To be able to begin to do so it is important to understand the economic and technological forces that are shaping the global economy, our industry and above all impacting on our working life, our journalism and our unions.

What does this mean for our media? For our working conditions? For journalism? For our unions?

And most importantly what should be be doing about it.

The media industry too is going through a revolutionary technological change – from digital first publishing to artificial intelligence, from big data to algorithms deciding news priorities – and it is a change which has an impact on jobs, on working conditions - including issues of control, speed, analytics and measurement, intensification, commodification - on quality, professional ethics and truth, on patterns of media ownership, on every aspect of the production and distribution process of news and media.

The economic model which sustained journalism for so long has collapsed.

Globally we are witnessing a decline in legacy or traditional media and a growth in a wide range of digital media – Digitized content (text, graphics, audio, and video) that can be transmitted over internet or computer networks - from small digital-only publishers, tv and radio networks to the online operations of major multimedia companies both national and global operators.

In the first instance such change has meant a massive loss of journalists jobs.

Time for Facebook and Google to pay their fair share

Not only do Facebook and Google capture an overwhelming share of the advertising market, but also most of their profits are not taxed anywhere.

According to a report by the think tank Taxwatch in 2018, Facebook, Google, Apple, Microsoft and Cisco, generated UK profits in 2017-18 of more than £6.6bn, but paid a combined tax bill of £191m (£49m for Google and £16m for Facebook) – as opposed to the £1bn they ought to have contributed.

A report published by two Dutch MEPs in September 2017 said Google, which declares its EU revenue in Ireland, paid just 0.36% to 0.82% in tax in the period in the EU. The report estimates the loss in tax revenue for EU countries of around €5 billion in that period. In the same period, Facebook’s tax revenue in the EU ranges from 0.03% to 0.10%.

Every cent of unpaid tax is money that other media, social protection systems and national pensions and welfare schemes are denied.

It’s time for tax justice!
In a decade 25,000 US newspaper journalists have been fired, a third of newspaper jobs have disappeared in just 3 years. Hundreds of titles have closed and many of those that survive do so with reduced staff and fewer pages.

In the UK 200 local newspapers closed in a decade.

At least a third of Canada’s journalist jobs have disappeared over the last six years.

At the same time the number of journalists working in digital publishing has tripled.

In 2005 for every one digital-only journalist there were twenty newspaper journalists. In 2015 for every one digital journalist there were four newspaper journalists – and that ratio continues to decline at an ever increasing rate.

And will continue to do so given ever greater penetration of internet and mobile devices.

In Central America internet penetration stands at 63% and mobile connectivity at 96% - but it is the fastest growing in the world. In Costa Rica internet penetration is 87%. In El Salvador it grew at 9% last year, in Guatemala at 16%. Honduras has the lowest penetration but it grew at 20% last year.

In Latin America for 18-24 year olds, online news is the primary source of news for 64% while printed newspapers account for just 5%. In just 2 years there has been a 6% rise in the number of people reading their news online.

It will happen at different speeds and in different ways in different countries but the future is coming.

If we want to remain relevant we need not to resist the future but to shape it.

If we claim to represent journalists we must increasingly open our doors to those working in digital media.

That doesn’t mean we abandon the fight for jobs in traditional media, that we don’t speak up for all journalists or that we open our doors to every political activist or creative writer who describes themselves as a journalist but that we recognize if we are to be able to speak for our profession and if we are to be able to exert any collective strength on employers and governments to improve the working lives of journalists we cannot ignore these changes.

And it is vital we do not.

The new jobs being created are overwhelmingly poorly paid, more precarious and with fewer social benefits than the jobs they are seeking to replace. The biggest survey to date of the conditions of digital journalists showed they worked longer hours, had a bigger workload, were expected to have more skills but received less training, had more health and safety concerns, faced a massive rise in ethical and professional problems, work with smaller budgets and fewer resources and earned lower pay.
Across the industry more jobs are outsourced, work is increasingly precarious, more are forced into various states of non-contract labour receiving fewer social benefits.

As a result there is a growing army of freelance, contract and casual labour – which for unions and journalists associations are harder to reach and more vulnerable.

And there is an impact on journalism. With fewer journalists and financial pressure to adapt to low advertising rates, papers and digital outlets are incentivized to focus on shorter articles which take less time and money to produce.

Reporters feel more pressure to write stories that get clicks – some media are even experimenting with metrics to help determine how much reporters should be paid.

In this economic environment, fake news and sensationalism thrive, local democracy suffers and time-consuming, in-depth investigative reports which get less traffic and cost more money to produce than lighter fare have become increasingly rare. Why seek the truth when it is more profitable to deliver clicks.

But the changing technology has also opened up new spaces within journalism. Even automation doesn’t just threaten jobs or editorial standards it offers opportunities.

Journalists are using algorithms to help them tell more stories about education, inequality, public safety, and more. With new tools for discovering and understanding massive amounts of information, journalists are finding new ways to identify and report human tales embedded in big data.

Many of the leading investigative news operations are now digital publishers.

The problem is not with the technology but economic model of media and how employers take advantage of these technologies not to enhance journalism but to cut costs, undermine decent work and boost profits.

And while the advent of the internet and digital media offered growing possibilities for democratizing the media the reality is concentration of media ownership far from being weakened is strengthened.

We think of the digital industry as lots of small creative entrepreneurs. And yet a majority of digital-only journalists work for just 30 major global corporations. We have more channels, more platforms, but not more owners—indeed we have fewer than ever.

Between them Google, Facebook, Microsoft and Apple control 95% of the world’s operating systems, 95% of search engines, 85% of social media.

In 2016 for every dollar spent on online advertising 49% went to Google, 40% went to Facebook. Just 11% went to all the rest.

Facebook made $325bn profit in 2017 and yet paid virtually no tax in any country. It is the world’s 6th largest company and its biggest news platform yet spends not one cent on creating original journalism. And so alongside our union organizing campaigns in the workplace we must also build a global movement for tax justice to ensure the tech giants pay their fair share and contribute to national social welfare programmes.

The rapid and profound change felt throughout our industry has also inevitably had a massive impact on our affiliates.

Almost every major journalists union has seen its membership decline in recent years. To some extent this should not surprise us. Journalism is changing rapidly. The tens of thousands of jobs being lost in print and broadcast – the traditional strengths of our unions – are being replaced by low paid, insecure jobs online which many unions either do not regard as journalism or are less able or unable because of laws to organise in.

Many journalist unions have been slow to adapt. Many still only organise in the print media or broadcasting and refuse to research the digital sector that they view as a threat that must be opposed. Many turn their backs on the growing freelance and precarious workforce believing either they are not proper journalists because they have job titles like content moderators or hat their presence undermines working conditions in traditional media.

Those that do attempt to enter the sector are sometimes ill equipped to organise in digital media – appearing negative, lacking an understanding of the industry and unable to target those who work remotely or for multiple clients and who do not have traditional employment.
contracts or lack a strong professional identity.

There are thousands of new jobs being created in the digital economy that involves journalistic skills and editorial decisions. But they are rarely recognised as journalism. These areas need more targeted, practical and strategic research to help affiliates explore the new recruiting and organising opportunities emerging in the digital economy as the paper product declines and disappears.

And they need us to understand we are not stronger by turning our backs on digital media workers – on the contrary we are merely managing our own decline.

There are obstacles - it is undoubtedly true that many young and digital media workers believe that unions are old-fashioned, have no place in today’s modern media industry, that they are an obstacle to the development of new and dynamic media and that many young workers are not interested in joining holding an overwhelmingly negative image of unions.

But none of us has ever met a young workers who says: I don't want higher pay I don't want to be treated fairly at work I don't want to be safe and healthy at work

And so for IFJ this strategic priority is to seize these opportunities and build our presence in digital media.

Our latest project - and this publication - is about how we equip our affiliates with the tools, information, experience, training and vision to effectively do so. In short unless we can build organisations able to demonstrate that by acting collectively we are in a stronger position to deliver improved social protections and working conditions our future is under threat.

But this sometimes gloomy picture only tells part of the story as this publication also demonstrates. Despite huge obstacles there are unions that have succeeded in helping workers organise and are winning improved rights and benefits for digital media workers.

In the media industry journalists at Guardian, Die Zeit Online, Vice, Salon, Huffington Post and dozens of other companies have got organised, won collective bargaining rights, improved pay, successfully addressed issues from working hours to contract issues.

Our job now is to translate these principles into the work we have before us – the research, the pilot projects, how these principles apply in different parts of the world, how we develop the resources necessary to translate them from ideas into action, how we adapt our working methods to better share experience and best practice - and win for workers.
Building on successes in digital media organizing

By Katherine Lapointe – Digital Media Organizer, CWA Canada

CWA Canada has been thrilled to welcome digital media workers at VICE Canada and BuzzFeed Canada into our membership. These organizing drives have been part of the recent way of unionization involving over 30 digital media outlets across North America in the past few years.

The resulting improvements have included pay increases, protection of editorial independence, a commitment to diversity, and other provisions that are turning these companies from high-turnover, precarious workplaces into ones where journalists can build sustainable careers.

Media outlets have been taking advantage of the uncertainty created by the ongoing changes in the industry. Young workers often enter the profession through unpaid internships and are told that since they are doing what they love, they should feel lucky despite the lack of pay and fair treatment.

CWA Canada has been supporting media interns and freelancers in fighting back against their unfair treatment. Our associate members (made up of interns and students) advocated for the adoption of model collective agreement language to better protect interns and now inform all incoming interns of their rights. Through our freelance membership, CWA Canada has supported freelancers in collectively refusing to sign bad contracts and refusing to cross the picket line during a recent newspaper strike.

This use of collective action among the most precarious segments of the media industry encouraged employees at digital media workplaces to also take a stand against unfair treatment. In
2016, workers at VICE Canada began to realize that they weren’t being adequately compensated and they started organizing. As one VICE worker wrote: “The fact of the matter is, we also make this company what it is. Our work, our stories, our time, ourselves—that’s what makes VICE a powerhouse. . . Despite VICE trading on individual employees’ talents, skills and finely-tuned spidey senses, we don’t often see a return in a material sense.” In 2019, workers at BuzzFeed Canada decided to form a union as well.

Key organizing issues

In many of these digital media campaigns, a central demand has been fairness in pay. These companies are both based in Toronto, where the wages they pay make it difficult to afford expensive rent, let alone pay off student debt and raise a family. At VICE Canada, workers negotiated for a minimum salary of $40,000 a year for all employees and achieved pay increases of between 2% and 52%. Including protection of editorial independence was also a priority during both union campaigns.

UNION VICTORY AT BUZZFEED

The IFJ spoke with Lauren Strapagiel, BuzzFeed breaking news reporter about their successful unionisation campaign

Many editorial staff at BuzzFeed’s Toronto operation are now officially members of the Canadian Media Guild, CWA. You were one of the employees that kicked off this unionisation drive. What made you take that initiative?

I actually started exploring unionisation more than a year ago. I was inspired by seeing other union drives, like at Vice Canada, but I also just fundamentally believe organizing is a useful tool for any newsroom. We were unsure at the time but then after the round of layoffs in January at BuzzFeed we sort of collectively realised it was time to discuss organising again.

How did you convince other staff members to unionise?

Honestly, it wasn’t very difficult, but we’re a special place. We’re a small, close-knit editorial staff that truly respects and trusts one another. We had some meetings and conversations and things were quick to come together. Basically, we just trusted that we had each other’s backs and that we were all doing this for the right reasons.

What challenges did you meet?

A lot of the work in doing this was coordinating with our counterparts in the US newsroom. That was more of a logistic challenge, making sure we were doing things in tandem, which was made more difficult by a leak to the media in New York.

What are the next steps?

The next step is actually bargaining for our collective agreement. We’ll be delivering notice that we want to start the process any day now, then from there we’ll start negotiations.

Any tips you would like to share with other journalists in digital media about setting up a union?

Don’t be afraid! We’ve all heard anti-union rhetoric here and there, and it’s very easy to think it’s too risky or not the right time. But it’s always a good time to secure your working conditions. You will always have more power when you band together.

You will always have more power when you band together.

Honestly, I anticipate the bargaining process being more challenging than anything we’ve faced so far, but I’m hopeful that BuzzFeed will prove me wrong and we’ll reach an agreement quickly.
They have set up international calls to compare notes on management tactics. These companies operate internationally, so it’s essential for the workers to collaborate across borders as well.

A clear separation between advertising and journalism is especially important in an industry that is constantly coming up with new ways to generate revenue. VICE workers negotiated contract language that ensures that “editorial employees will not be expected to work on content that has editorial approvals from a non-editorial third party.”

The workers at VICE also prioritized making improvements for temporary employees. Contract employees are now converted to permanent after 12 consecutive months in the same position and receive paid time off. Another key demand in both the VICE and the BuzzFeed organizing drives was gaining a greater say in the workplace and improving transparency.

As BuzzFeed Canada workers wrote in their public statement: “As revealed in the recent round of layoffs, there is a lack of uniform severance and communication standards across the company. We are striving to improve transparency, equity, diversity, and better working conditions across the company.”

**Key factors in campaign success**

These organizing drives have been successful in North America because workers have built strong majority support in their workplaces. The VICE organizing committee was large, diverse, and actively doing the work to reach out to their coworkers. At BuzzFeed, all the workers were directly involved throughout the process and proudly wore union buttons in the office.

The momentum of the growing global media labour movement benefited both campaigns. Throughout the campaign at VICE, the organizing committee spoke with workers at VICE US and VICE UK. They shared information and successful campaign tactics. VICE US members were invited to speak at a VICE Canada membership meeting to share their experiences at the bargaining table. BuzzFeed Canada workers also connected with their colleagues globally and coordinated the timing of their union application with both the German and US offices. They have since set up international calls to compare notes on management tactics. These companies operate internationally, so it’s essential for the workers to be collaborating across borders as well.

These campaigns have also drawn on tactics that make use of the workers’ social media and communication skills. VICE Canada workers started a Facebook group for discussions about the union, and BuzzFeed workers have turned to social media to publicly demonstrate their support for their union. Young workers have been leading the way in these collective struggles for fair working conditions in digital media. CWA Canada knows that the future of quality journalism depends on quality jobs in journalism, and we look forward to continuing to support workers in organizing to secure this future.

**FACT**

Unionisation at *Think Progress*: delivered a higher minimum salary and a commitment that 1% of *ThinkProgress’* advertising revenue would be shared evenly among bargaining unit members.
Best Practice

Campaigning in digital media
A case study from MEAA
Australia’s journalists’ union

Australia’s print media has traditionally had a strong union presence through MEAA, and its predecessor, the Australian Journalists’ Association.

MEAA continues to have high density at the two major publishers – News Corp and the metropolitan print division of Nine Entertainment Company, formerly known as Fairfax – and the public broadcaster, the ABC, where collective agreements have been negotiated which ensure pay and working conditions are generous.

But it is a different story at most digital only outlets, where the union has had to build from the ground up. To help achieve growth, density and improvement of journalists’ working conditions, MEAA has built a digital media committee and launched a Good Jobs in Digital Media campaign.

Digital media in Australia can be divided into two main groups: the Australian arms of global brands such as The Guardian, the New York Times, Daily Mail, Buzzfeed, and Vice; and home grown operations including Crikey!, mamamia, The Conversation, The New Daily, Junkee and Pedestrian.

The short history of unionism in the digital media sector means workers at these outlets are frequently employed under inferior conditions to staff at the established publications, even though they are doing an identical job. They are working for digital publications, but their working conditions are locked in the analogue age.

The most glaring examples of this are provisions for overtime and working at weekends or outside of normal working hours. This is in part because the industrial award that underpins print journalists does not extend to digital media outlets.

While employees of established publications received paid overtime in addition to six weeks annual leave, and “penalty rates” for weekend and anti-social hours, digital journalists receive only four weeks leave and no additional payments. The unfairness of this situation has prompted MEAA to launch its Good Jobs in Digital Media campaign. Drawing inspiration from the success of organising in some of the larger US digital outlets, such as Vice, HuffPo, Slate and Vox, the campaign is endeavouring to get digital outlets to sign onto a good jobs charter as a springboard towards negotiating collective agreements.

Digital journalists argue that they deliver real value to their publications, but that is not reciprocated given a lack of job security, paid overtime, inconsistent wages and salaries, and limited opportunities for career development. Our members in digital media are dedicated to seeing their online publications adopt the ethics and high levels of integrity that have been painstakingly established at traditional print outlets.

The Good Jobs in Digital Media campaign was sparked by a
union campaign at Private Media (publisher of Crikey!) where additional compensation was won for staff required to work in the early hours of the morning to prepare a daily newsletter to subscribers. This encouraged workers at other digital outlets to begin unionising to win on issues like overtime and working unsociable hours. MEAA members at Private Media went on to successfully bargain for a collective agreement.

Another milestone was the securing of an enterprise agreement at Guardian Australia that made wages transparent, resulted in genuine pay increases for all editorial staff and protections such as parental leave.

In 2018, MEAA members at Guardian Australia built on these previous achievements to tackle and win paid overtime, accrual of time-off-in-lieu of overtime, guaranteed yearly grading reviews, improved parental leave and significant pay rises of $2200 in the first year and 2.5% in the second and third years.

The digital media campaign is overseen by a semi-autonomous committee of predominantly young journalists active in their digital workplaces. MEAA provides support but allows the committee to set the direction for organising and recruitment within their industry, and educating their fellow journalists about the benefits of unionism.

There are several facets to the campaign. Through the Fair Work Commission, MEAA is seeking to modernise the Journalists Published Media Award to acknowledge that journalists at digital outlets do the same job as those who work in print, and to update the basic set of conditions to extend hours of work, overtime, shift penalty payments and other key conditions to employees engaged by online publications. This would make an immediate, material difference for all journalists not employed under collectively negotiated agreements. Not surprisingly, media employers are opposing any updating of the Award.

Secondly, a Good Jobs in Digital Media Charter has been developed following surveys of workers in digital media and feedback collated by members of MEAA’s Digital Media Committee. It outlines what members believe a good job in digital media should look like. The purpose of the charter is to raise expectations in our industry and to start the discussion in digital media workplaces about how to campaign to win the entitlements and protections that cover workers in the traditional print and broadcast media.

According to the charter, elements of a good job in digital media include consistent and fair job descriptions and pay across the industry; diversity in hiring; adherence to established ethical practices, such as MEAA’s Code of Ethics; access to professional...
development opportunities; effective dispute resolution processes; and having a voice in decisions within workplaces and in the industry through the union.

Complementing the campaign around the charter at smaller or new digital media outlets, MEAA has successfully negotiated collective agreements at some individual digital workplaces, such as Private Media, The Conversation and Guardian Australia.

The Good Jobs in Digital Media campaign also acknowledges that younger journalists in digital outlets often do not have senior, older colleagues in their workplaces as mentors, or to introduce them to the union. Due to the increasingly transient nature of journalism, they do not expect to spend long periods of their career with a single outlet, and are just as likely to identify with the profession of digital journalism than with the organisation they work for.

They are looking to the union to provide the structured networks across the industry that in the past were formed within individual workplaces, both through social events and opportunities for professional development.

Recruiting and organising workers in digital media is a challenge, but MEAA has found social media to be a critical tool for reaching out to digital journalists and helping them to network with each other. Most journalists are active on Twitter, and with almost 16,000 followers, MEAA’s Twitter account is a regular platform for provocative discussion about the ups and downs of digital journalism.

MEAA has also set up a private Facebook group, Digital Journalists Australia, as a forum for people to share industry news and updates, upcoming events, and job opportunities. The group is open to any digital journalists, whether they are union members or not, and has grown to more than 200 people. Regular networking and professional development events are held to bring digital journalists together. A recent event in Sydney following the Australian federal election was attended by close to 100 journalists and media workers.

There have been some encouraging signs from this approach, not only at those outlets mentioned above which have negotiated collective agreements, but at smaller operations such as The Conversation and Vice Australia, which now have union membership of close to 100% in their workplaces.

However, we haven’t been successful at all outlets. BuzzFeed Australia recently laid off 11 of its 14 editorial staff as part of a global cutback in the groups’ newsrooms. While we are involved in assisting individual members during these layoffs, we were not successful in unionising those left behind. Journalists at BuzzFeed US have recently moved to unionise, in what is a very difficult, anti-union environment.

However, we have had some strong successes, with Junkee, a youth-oriented news and social affairs site with a relatively small staff, recently declaring itself a 100% union workplace.

These changes are beginning to make an impact in MEAA’s democratic structures. The average age of our elected national delegates committee has come down considerably – and for the first time in our history as a union, women now make up a majority of this committee.

Our recent elections also saw an Aboriginal delegate elected to our national committee for the first time. This delegate is a digital media journalist, joining other digital media workers on our committee.
Workers in media are ready to stand together for jobs that are fairly paid, respected and have safe hours of work. A good job in digital media means:

1. There are consistent and fair job descriptions and pay across the industry.

2. We work for organisations that actively hire, retain and promote people from diverse backgrounds.

3. Journalists reserve the right to remove their name if ethical standards are breached.

4. There is access to professional development opportunities.

5. Where editors and managers communicate near- and long-term changes within the workplace and industry that will shape our roles.

6. We have a voice in decisions at our workplaces and in our industry through our union.

7. We have an efficient way to resolve work disputes that is local, where decision-makers are known to staff and have the power to make decisions and, staff are informed about the process.

8. Safety issues at work like excessive hours are actively managed. That could mean penalty rates for unsociable working hours, being paid overtime and workload management.

9. Our managers acknowledge that we work for global companies and find ways to recognise our contributions (including with money) when we are not in the home office.

10. Journalists and producers should not be compelled to rewrite the work of others without giving sufficient credit to the original author.
The Future of Work: Change the Rules

By Sharon Burrow, General Secretary, ITUC

This June the International Labour Organisation will mark its 100th anniversary at its annual conference. The future of work will at the top of the agenda, and negotiations between governments, unions and employers are expected to deliver an ILO Centenary Declaration, a high-level political document which should set a course for the ILO for the future, and also live up to the aspirations of its founders.

The ILO was conceived in the aftermath of World War I through the 1919 Treaty of Versailles to create the social and economic conditions necessary to avoid another global conflict. In other words, a social contract between labour, capital and government. Tragically, the undermining of the social contract began soon after it was launched, thus helping create the conditions for the Second World War. Once again, as that war drew towards a close, a new social contract was launched through the Declaration of Philadelphia, which like the Versailles Treaty was based on the principle that “labour is not a commodity”.

Decades of corporate globalisation in the later part of last century have undermined the social contract once again, with unprecedented and pervasive levels of economic inequality and insecurity. Worldwide, 300 million people are working but in poverty, nearly 200 million are officially unemployed and slavery and informal work are part of global supply chains. While global wealth has trebled in the past 30 years, we are experiencing unprecedented levels of economic inequality. 59% of respondents to the ITUC Global Poll say that they are only just managing to get by, or worse.

Little wonder that people are losing trust in institutions and in democracy itself, providing a rich feed of discontent which is being manipulated by nationalists, dictators and authoritarian leaders. The world desperately needs a new social contract, as the impact of digital technology poses new and profound challenges and the looming catastrophe of runaway climate change threatens all who inhabit the planet. The new social contract needs to be affirmed in the ILO Centenary Declaration.

To help establish the frame for the June Conference, the ILO set up a Global Commission on the Future of Work, bringing together a wide range of expertise from the 28 Commission members. Their report, published in January, calls for a reinvigoration of the social contract, with a Universal Labour Guarantee as the bedrock. This Guarantee would mean that all workers, regardless of their employment
arrangements, are covered by the fundamental ILO Conventions (union organising and collective bargaining rights, and protection from discrimination, forced labour and child labour), as well as protection of their health and safety at work, the guarantee of a living wage and maximum limits on working hours. Covering all workers in this way would push back on the competitive advantage so many employers seek by forcing employees to work as freelancers and contractors against their will. The Commission also called for social protection to be universal, and put forward other key recommendations on lifelong learning, gender equality supporting Just Transition in the fight against climate change as well as supporting people through technological transformation.

The new social contract must be based on a human-centered agenda, with people in control. There are more than a few examples already of the interface between humans and “artificial intelligence” being stretched beyond the limit, including two catastrophic aircraft crashes and the grounding of an entire class of aircraft, with “do it yourself” regulation apparently a major contributory factor.

The Commission also called for regulation of data use and algorithmic accountability, along with an international governance system for digital labour platforms which should be developed through the ILO.

With huge tech companies now buying up all manner of products and services, flouting labour rights, national constraints and competition policy, and avoiding taxes on their billions, regulation is vital and the need is urgent. Possibly nowhere is their impact more apparent than on the media sector, with quality, professional journalism being swamped by the echo chambers of the social media giants. A handful of big data companies have been able to achieve virtual monopoly status with the acquiescence of regulators who have failed to intervene, while at the other end of the scale, competition policies are used to stop freelance or own-account workers from setting minimum rates and conditions. The ITUC applauds the successes of journalist’s unions in overturning these restrictions, which provide a basis upon which we can rebalance competition policy so that it works for people.

The owners of the digital titans are still refusing to accept the full extent of their editorial responsibility, although there are signs that they are now in favour of regulation – most likely to protect their business models and dominant market positions. They are certainly not up front about the appalling and often precarious conditions in which most of the thousands of content moderators work, nor about the psychological needs of these workers. The reliance of social media platforms on algorithmic moderation is no substitute to the evident need of thousands upon thousands more people curating content on the internet, people who must have the rights which are set out in the Universal Labour Guarantee.

And we must not forget that for the nearly 50% of the world’s population who don’t have internet access, at least at home, the digital promised land is but a dream. Enabling those who are excluded from the internet to have affordable connectivity should be a global aim, alongside the most basic needs.

The ITUC at its Congress in Copenhagen last December adopted a comprehensive policy statement, which we are implementing under four ongoing pillars of our work: peace, democracy and rights; regulating economic power: global shifts – just transitions; and equality. These are complemented by three “frontline” public and industrial campaigns: Democracies for People – Change the Rules; A New Social Contract; and Just Transition for Climate Ambition. We welcome our cooperation and strong relationship with the IFJ, as part of the international union family, and also as the guarantor of quality journalists with quality jobs. And we look forward to strengthening and deepening that relationship as the challenges we all face multiply and deepen.

**Huge tech companies are flouting labour rights, national constraints and competition policy, and avoiding taxes on their billions, regulation is vital and the need is urgent.**
Building stronger unions: lessons and opportunities

With support from Union to Union and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung the IFJ has been carrying out research, developing campaigns and building union strength in digital media and among younger and women workers. As part of that project we have conducted a global survey of the state of our unions and our industry. Over the following pages we will highlight some key survey findings and showcase some of the national projects which are helping enable our affiliates to face the challenge of organising in digital media and recruiting younger and women workers.

The AJI Pilot Project for Youth in Unions
By Ratna Ariyanti, AJI Executive Member

Convergence is at the heart of today’s digital media revolution. Media convergence leads to media digitization and changes the way people consume and search for news. This has posed significant impacts to the work of journalists today in Indonesia.

The merging of media forms has changed journalists’ work rhythm and the method by which they produce and create news. Media companies in Indonesia today oblige journalists to multi-task. Going out into the field, journalists take more equipment to create media content that combines texts with other forms of media, with the purpose of delivering a more dynamic experience to the readers.

Newsrooms are also demanding more content, delivered faster and in multiple media forms. With all these higher requirements, journalists work longer and have less time for activities outside their work, including getting involved in worker unions.

To learn more about this issue, the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) conducted research through several methods, including an online survey, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The results show that most journalists argue that working is already consuming a lot of their time and so does the pressure of work, therefore they do not have spare time, energy, as well as attention to join and actively be involved in union activities.

However, there are opportunities to the unions to build and grow more members particularly through trainings and development.

Without training in the newsroom, most journalists learn new skills by training themselves through having discussions with colleagues or attending trainings provided by the union, in this case that is AJI. If unions can provide training programs then there are possibilities to spread and build the awareness of the
union’s work and benefits. Key findings included:
- Only a third of the respondents were satisfied at work (another 8.2% unsatisfied and half of the respondents chose neutral),
- Most of the respondents prefer to stay in journalism field in the next five years due to various reasons, such as being a journalist is their passion and still believe that journalism can bring changes to the society.

Since the project, AJI, especially the chapter in the main cities such as Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya, Bandung has improved the way it communicates to young journalists through social media. They also offer different programs, including weekly discussions to debate the latest issues. AJI also got support from the IFJ-UTU project to do the campaign “Young Journalists Joining Unions”. One of the activities was the poster and blog competition.

In future, AJI aims to continue improving the communication strategy to grow the members of young journalists. Adding more videos, infographics, and photos will be included into the communication strategy. AJI also has a plan to improve the content in social media by doing trainings in several chapters. AJI will benefit from spreading the activities, campaigns, and the program of the unions through the social media.

A key recommendation for AJI was strengthening the collaboration with journalism students or press clubs in universities. It also changed its membership policy by allowing students to join as members.

In my view: Didit Hariyadi from AJI Makassar

Didit was one of the researcher for the IFJ project. Now in charge of AJI’s organization division. On the last general election to vote for the new chairman and vice chairman of AJI Makassar in March 2019, Didit was also one of the candidates for vice chairman.

How do you see the benefit of having research on recruiting young journalists for AJI Makassar?

It is very essential for us as we see the organization in general is facing difficulties to increase the number of young journalists as our members. By having the research, we will have the opportunity to gather the information and hopefully tackle the challenges.

What is the reason the young journalists are not interested to join with AJI?

We are very strict with code of ethics. Not only that, AJI also has the code of conduct which regulate every members. Young journalists see that AJI is too complicated because it governs its members with so many rules. Therefore they do not see joining AJI is not fun and not important for them.

How do you engage with young journalists in Makassar?

We have regular discussion to grab the attention of young journalists. We also design the office of AJI like a coffee shop or co-working space so young journalists can visit and work in here. Young journalists then can have conversations with members of AJI who also come regularly to this place to use the wifi and file the stories of photos. We believe having both formal and informal activities can bring us closer to the young journalists.

If the young journalists join with AJI, how does the board committee engage with them?

We usually will ask them to prepare the programs or activities so that they can involve with AJI. We also appointed young journalists to be a part of board committee. We hope it will increase the sense of belonging to the union.
Unions in Asia Pacific region

Our Unions
- The average number of members per union is 3,620 of which 489 are women, representing 13.5% of membership. In Australia, the union has 50% membership, and Mongolia 60%.
- The average executive board has 21 members of which 4.9 (22%) are women. In countries such as Japan, there are no women on the executive board. In Mongolia, the numbers of women on the executive board is more than half of the total numbers of the board (73%).

Equality
- Women members represent 11% of the total members. The countries with the highest numbers of women are Mongolia (70%), Hong Kong (50%), Malaysia (48%). Unions with the highest percentage of women in the executive boards are Mongolia with 73% followed by Taiwan (55%) and Nepal (42%).
- 47% of unions have a gender committee and 57% have gender policy. 89% of unions do not have a gender quota.

The Media Industry:
- The numbers of journalists are increasing according to 74% of members.
- Currently most journalists are employed: 37% newspapers, followed by 32% online digital, and 21% TV; 11% Radio;
- The fastest growth over past decade was online according to 52% of affiliates.
- 53% of journalists are paid less than 250 USD a month, 16% earn between 250 USD-1,000 USD, 10% receive between 1,000 USD-2,500 USD, and 21% earn between 2,500 USD-5,000 USD
- Only 31% of affiliates currently negotiate collective agreements. According to 15% of them the numbers of collective agreements have decreased in the past decade, while 31% report they have risen, and 10% remained the same.
- 79% of AP unions do organise freelancers. The average percentage of membership that is freelance has risen from below 18% to between 20%-50% in past decade.

Union Priorities:
Press freedom still remains the highest priority while other critical organizing aspects of unions do not figure highly in union agendas.
- 94% Press freedom
- 57% Journalism standards
- 57% Safety
- 47% Professional training
- 37% Labor rights/Wages

Priorities that ranked lower than this included recruitment, collective agreements, individual representation, freelance membership, gender equality and authors rights.

But when asked what areas unions would like to focus more on, the top five results were:
1. Press freedom advocacy
2. Leadership strengthening
3. Recruitment
4. Youth recruitment
5. Collective bargaining

Unions and digital media
- 63% of unions currently organize journalists in the digital media. Only 15% of the unions have collective agreements in digital media, covering around 5%-30% of the digital workers.
- Wages between digital workers and traditional media workers are mostly the same (78%).
- Only a third of AP unions have been developing strategies to organize digital media.
- 21% of unions had conducted targeted campaigning for digital workers, but the idea of having dedicated working group covering digital media is yet to happen.
- When unions were asked about the obstacles to organizing in the digital media, most responded that journalists are not interested in unions (63%), while others conceded they had yet to research the sector and do not understand the needs of digital journalists (26%).
- 11% of unions still do not recognize digital journalists as journalists.
- Unions need assistance to develop the skills to organize the digital media workers, particularly in knowing best practices from other unions, running digital campaign workshops, and digital communication trainings.

Union Finance
- 94% of affiliates depend on membership fees, 42% on donations, 36% on projects to supplement income, 21% on sponsorships, 11% on government subsidies, 5% on public funding.
In 2018, the Confederation of Mongolian Journalists (CMJ) undertook a research survey to determine the status of digital media in Mongolia, understanding the current environment and where it is heading, including looking at issues, worker’s rights.

The CMJ surveyed 202 people – 98 from digital media; 50 from traditional media and 54 from the general public. 54% of the respondents are female and 46% are male; the majority aged between 25 and 50.

FINDINGS:
- Non-management roles (journalists, editors, writers, designers, camera person) said they are working in excess of 46 hours per week. This was the same across digital and traditional media
- Almost 50% of respondents said that they earn less than USD 150 per month and only 4% earn over USD 250 per month
- The main issues facing journalists in both traditional and digital media are: Old technical equipment; lack of work supply/welfare; and responsibility.
- Digital media is still quite young in Mongolia, and thus digital media outlets have fewer employees than traditional media outlets
- The issues for media were different when compared with digital media and traditional media, as evident in the below graph

CONCLUSION:
The legal frameworks in Mongolia have not adapted to support the proliferation of digital media in Mongolia, which has created an environment that is unregulated. This raises issues of professional ethics, fair reporting, accountability, transparency as well as the protection of journalists. There is an urgent need to adapt to the changing nature of the media and provide advice and support for journalists working in new digital media outlets. Working conditions, including long hours and pay are a big issue across the media in Mongolia that need to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
The project team developed the below recommendations.
I. Mongolian digital media representatives learn of how digital media, especially regarding social media pages and news portal websites are managed and regulated from international experiences.
II. IFJ assist and support Mongolian media sector by increasing their capacity through training and research to share experience and learn.
III. CMJ to partner with multi-stakeholders to develop the regulations and policy on the management of social media and website operations by journalists.
IV. CMJ continue its effort to increase professional ethics of journalists and writers.
V. Mongolia learn from international best practices of digital media.

Digital media workers are increasingly unionising and they won union recognition at roughly 30 US digital media news sites since 2015. According to the Union membership and coverage database, the number of unionized workers in internet publishing in the USA has risen 20-fold since 2010.


Digital Media in Mongolia
A UTU-funded small grant project
Union leaders and digital media activists from the Asia Pacific region discussed media’s changing business model, the rapid rise of the internet as a publishing platform and device for media work, and the shift of consumers from traditional media to new media.

Importantly, the meeting in Bangkok on November 3 and 4, 2018, talked about the critical impact this was having in terms of building recruitment strategies for unions and the challenges that unions need to address if they are to survive.

One of the key messages from the workshop was journalist unions must adapt to the digital ecosystem, and become more inclusive to digital media workers in order to remain strong and relevant. All agreed that unions need to be strong to ensure the protection and regulation of digital media into the future.

All attested that the number of young journalists joining unions was decreasing and acknowledged the challenge of attracting young journalists to become members. As a result, senior journalists - who grew up in the traditional media and are not digital natives - are still dominating the executive committees of the unions. But for a new generation of potential members, they need role models and leaders that they can relate to. One participant from Hong Kong said his union urgently needs young people and he also feels he is too old to be a chairman. But the biggest question is how to get young people into executive committees.

Unions in the AP region face a clear generation gap. Young journalists who are in their new career or mid-level in the news organisations are too busy to be active in a traditional union environment or actions. They work and think differently. Young journalists also face challenges, such as meeting increasingly high expectations of staff-strapped newsrooms and financial issues with many being paid a lower salary than previous generations. So there is plenty to organise on if unions are prepared to take up these issues.

Other participants also highlighted the lack of communication strategies to deliver strong union messages, campaigns, and programmes to young journalists. The limitation was a lack of use or knowledge by of unions in using digital platforms, multimedia, and infographics. It is a critical issue for executive committees to develop communications plans and strategies on this.

It has been clear that young journalists and digital media workers are not really attracted to the messages delivered in the traditional way. Unions need to be more creative to use different technology and social media to engage with young journalists.

Even though there are some challenges, the AP meeting resolved that unions are still essential and even more important for media workers in the digital era. Some labour issues, such as contractual arrangements, the gig economy and precarious work no longer guarantee job security. A lack of insurance for workers and long working hours in the digital media is evidence that digital media workers need to unionise so that they can negotiate and improve their working conditions.

Examples and experiences were shared from Justin Molito, the director of organizing at the Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE) and UNI Apro’s Director for Youth Michelle Bellino in organizing youth and young journalists.

Unions need to be more creative to use different technology and social media to engage with young journalists.
engaging them to the leadership for labor rights on how to get the attention of non-traditional workers through “social movement unionism”.

The meeting identified three key issues that unions need to continue address:
- press freedom and social unionism
- organizing digital media
- the issue of professionalism and ethics

The meeting also formulated a series of recommendations, which are:
- Journalists unions need to adapt to the digital ecosystem and review their membership criteria to organize digital media workers.
- Journalists unions need to integrate digital platforms into their organizing and campaigning, for stronger and effective advocacy.
- Unions need to devise strategies to support media in fighting mis/disinformation as well as finding the sustainable business model.
- Skill development programs such as training need to be developed to attract young journalists to unions; to provide organized journalists with new skills in digital storytelling, data journalism, mobile journalism, multimedia and infographics.
- Unions need to support media organizations in upholding professionalism and professional ethical practices to produce quality journalism works.
- Unions in the region should exchange information and best practices to broaden perspectives and learn from each other’s experiences.
- Unions need to stand up for the rights of digital media workers and remain vigilant to new information technology laws that are increasingly being used to restrict freedom online.
Unions in Latin America/Caribbean region

This report collects the results of in-depth interviews with seven trade union representatives from Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

Gender equality and youth
- The proportion of unionized women does not reach 50% of the membership in any country. The non-existence of a gender parity is even worse when we observe access to management positions: only the Peruvian association approaches parity (40.91%). Despite this, of the seven organizations represented, three are led by women.
- Among all the unions and associations that completed the survey, only Honduras does not have a space dedicated to dealing with issues related to gender.
- Only three organizations (Peru, the Dominican Republic and Panama) have dedicated policies oriented towards gender equality.
- The presence of representatives under 35 is significantly low, with the exception of Uruguay.

Membership and Organization
- With the exception of the Dominican Republic and Panama, all the organizations surveyed affiliate media workers without a formal labor contract. Among these unions (with the exception of Uruguay) all have a very high proportion of the membership that is dedicated to independent work or by contract; Colombia being the country with the lowest proportion (50%) and Honduras the highest (90%).
- Most organizations surveyed organize freelancers. Only unions and associations in Colombia, Honduras and the Dominican Republic do not organize them.

Union work
- Not all surveyed organizations undertake collective bargaining. The only unions and associations that work on collective agreements are Uruguay, Peru and Panama.
- None of the organizations have a specific work project for the independent or freelance membership despite constituting in many cases the largest proportion of its members.

Income of journalists
- The majority (5 out of 7) of journalists in the region are on a salary scale of 250 to 1000 USD per month. Below that scale are the Honduran workers, while the Uruguayans are above.

Digitization
- 67% of the unions affiliate journalists who work in digital media. Despite this, no organization has entered into collective agreements in the sector.
- In response to inquiries about whether organizations have a strategy to organize journalists in digital media, whether specific campaigns have been carried out for digital journalists and whether they have working groups devoted to covering digital media, only Ecuador could say yes. Faced with the question about the existence of a membership section dedicated to digital media, the only organization apart from Ecuador that does is in the Dominican Republic.

When asked about the challenges of organizing digital workers all unions highlighted that:
- Journalists do not believe that unions can help them
- Journalists think that unions are outdated and do not understand digital media
- Journalists are not interested in unions

Therefore, the lack of strategies and/or active policies to deal with the digitization of the sector in most organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean is alarming. This problem is deepened in the absence of real data on the digital media sector: Only in Peru and Colombia have proper research been carried out.

These results are cause for concern but they also form the basis for the discussions across the region about how to transform our unions and how to develop programmes to recruit and build among digital workers and younger and women journalists.
Organising for our future world of work

by Johannes Studinger
General Secretary, UNI-MEI

The world of work in the media and entertainment industries has changed considerably over the past years and will further undergo significant changes.

Digitalisation, technological progress and convergence between traditional media and the Internet have significantly changed the work place and working patterns and have led to the emergence of new types of jobs. The convergence of digital media and technology is accelerating creating a growing diversity of production, new distribution models and uncertainty.

While the labour market in our sector is expected to further grow, the percentage of short-term, freelance including self-employment is very likely to increase. Consolidation and fragmentation will coexist and have an impact on the prospects of collective bargaining. Global and regional multinationals will be setting the patterns of industrial relations.

In both, the commercial and public sector, the pressure to lower costs in entertainment and media productions is a predominant feature, which in turn leads to savings on talent, crew and staff costs and an increased pressure on working conditions. It also leads to an increasingly bigger part of productions being outsourced and subcontracted. In this volatile environment, project-based work contracts, self-employment and the occurrence of new forms of work arrangements are on the rise.

These work arrangements are often falling in a grey zone between labour law and civil or commercial law generating labour market fragmentation. Many workers are not covered by basic social security and labour rights. As many workers with these non-standard forms of employment have no or limited access to training a new skills divide is emerging that creates barriers to the sustainable development and quality jobs undermining high professional standards, equality and health and safety at work. Organising and representing workers in this global digital economy shaping this future world of work is the priority for UNI Global Union and its affiliates. Together we focus on targeting global and regional companies, promoting sector-wide agreements and organising new areas of work and building international policies and standards.

Many unions are driving campaigns targeting multinationals, sector agreements and new areas of work: In 2017, after a long and hard campaign, BECTU, the UK media and entertainment union, has concluded a collective bargaining agreement covering big budget films improving the conditions and remuneration of thousands of freelance workers in film and TV production working from more than 450 companies such as All3Media and
Endemol Shine. During the same period, the entertainment unions and guilds in the US, representing talent and crew, have increased the coverage of freelance workers in both the media and entertainment industries negotiating new remuneration provisions that cover revenue streams stemming from the online exploitation of audiovisual works. In response to the digital business models, they have created new, sustainable remuneration models for the freelance workforce working for the major US studios such as Disney, NBC Universal and Warner Brothers and for many independent companies. Further, they have been successful in organising companies that produce for the Internet only. On both sides of the Atlantic, efforts to organise visual effects and video game workers are taking shape.

Over the last three years, organising campaigns targeting Africa, South-America and Asia that are co-financed by the UNI Organising Fund and supported by UNI Organisers have enabled media unions in Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire and Malaysia to set-up new union structures in commercial broadcasting and to negotiate collective agreements. Unions use UNI’s international solidarity network for union-to-union cooperation. For example, the Canadian and Argentinian entertainment unions currently partner with Colombian colleagues providing mentorship on organising and health and safety in film production, which has led to initiating a first-ever dialogue with the major producers in 2018.

The cooperation among the sister Global Union Federations in the media and entertainment sector is important to successfully tackle common challenges of the future world of work. Currently, three major joint projects involving the European region of IFJ, FIA, FIM and UNI MEI provide for peer-to-peer training among unions in organising freelance and self-employed workers, create a platform for cooperation with major employers’ associations such as the EBU and ACT and their member companies on skills development tackling the digital transformation and seek to improve the enforcement of equality policies throughout the audiovisual sector. This working together empowers each organisation and its members.

**Tips for unionising in digital media**

As part of the unionisation campaign US digital media workers discussed the challenges to recruit their fellow workers - and what to do about it. Here’s a few ideas.

- Help to resist individualization of work. Promote collective values and social solidarities to change individualism of young workers
- Enhance the knowledge of young workers about labour unions: they could have a positive orientation towards unions, but they lack experience and knowledge about them, so they don’t usually consider joining.
- Update and modernize the concept of unions: they are not just for factories.
- Improve communication; focus on face-to-face organizing, campaigns, emails. Communicate regularly, particularly on social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr…).
- Convince workers that labour representation can improve working conditions (give them a sense of hope). At a time of economic depression for the media, this plays directly to employees’ sense of uncertainty about their future.
- Make unionizing processes public in media, detailing the reasons that spurred unionization, building public support.
- Address the seniority issue in unions: digital media young workers feel unions only protect long-serving workers at the expense of young workers and do not prioritise youth.
- Work for benefits for contract and freelancers workers
- Promote self-organized and worker-driven nature of unions, avoiding the perceptions of unions as third parties.

Joining a union gives workers a safe, collective and protected space to safely voice concerns without risk to their individual reputations or relationship with managers.
Young workers: not just the future but the present

It is always important to recognize that you can never directly translate the experience of one country, one union or one struggle with another.

But it is also true that by sharing our experiences we can all learn from each other.

And despite the fact that each of us has a different economic development, each media a different tradition, each a distinctive journalism rooted in its culture and history the challenges we face today, as workers and as journalists have many common factors.

Such challenges – from a growth in precarious work to the daily threats and harassment faced by journalists, from an economic model that treats information not as a right but as a commodity to be bought, sold or traded for economic gain or political favours and from a media that talks about fairness and justice but denies its workers union rights, discriminates in pay, pensions and working conditions against women and which often treats younger workers as little more than a source of cheap labour – can be found in all parts of the world.

And in this climate our unions too face similar challenges. And one of those key challenges that as our global survey has demonstrated is that we have an ageing and in many cases overwhelmingly male membership. It is a fact that too many of our unions and associations are not sufficiently attractive to women and young members.

It is important we urgently seek to address this failing. We have one real advantage in doing so.

It is a universal truth, demonstrated in UN and other statistics, that where women or young workers are organised in strong unions that pay is on average higher, conditions are better, inequality is reduced and social benefits are improved.

The figures are different in different countries – but the facts are clear.

So how do we turn those advantages into action to win more young workers to our unions.

A recent study of 36 union federations in 22 countries from Europe, Asia and North America reflected on steps they had taken to increase membership and activism among younger workers.

Many of the points seem like common sense but it is worth repeating them especially as the single biggest reason workers in every country give for why they have not joined a union is because no one asked them. Sometimes it really is that simple!

The key actions can be summed up in 5 points.

First we need to target the places where young people work – for us that means certain types of media – and increasingly it means digital media. It is unlikely we will recruit many younger workers at a national economic newspaper or pensioners’ magazine.

So plan strategically and research; Which sectors of the media have more younger workers, where do those who leave university first go to work?
It is not just at work that younger workers or women workers should be targeted. Many unions have begun to organise a presence at festivals, concerts, sporting events, sponsoring professional conferences – finding new ways to reach workers.

In Denmark for example the trade union federation organises an annual Jobs Patrol, sending out thousands of activists to the workplaces most likely to employ young people and to festivals and other events armed with information about young and women workers rights, minimum wages and other rights and entitlements and crucially highlighting cases where the unions have successfully addressed such problems.

In the north of Belgium one union organises an annual outreach to 30 or 40 locations where younger workers congregate - to bars, to cinemas, public spaces – where in a relaxed environment those workers can talk to more experienced union members and have direct contact with the unions.

Collecting email addresses, twitter handles and facebook contacts provides unions with a way to keep in touch about future activities.

Many unions have also built alliances with pressure groups, movements and campaigns which focus on key issues for young or women workers – women’s groups, student groups, social justice campaigns in order to find new ways to talk to younger workers about how their participation in the union could address issues they face.

Many unions now have strong outreach campaigns in schools and universities. My own trade union sends speakers and stalls to every single journalism course every year and the British trade union movement has a schools programme which reaches hundreds of thousands of younger workers every year.

But education without action means nothing. So the second key point is to ensure the union runs high-profile campaigns focusing on key younger workers’ issues.

The best way to be able to engage younger members is to be actively campaigning on the issues that directly affect them. If the union can show it takes those issues seriously and with maximum participation can bring about changes then younger members or women are more likely to become involved.

But those campaigns cannot just be static. They must be interactive and engaging. For example one union in Italy created a fake online employment agency and
issued provocative adverts aimed at women and young workers for jobs where the conditions were clearly in breach of the law and totally unacceptable to most people. The advertisements appeared online and on posters in bars and cafes and in the street. The job adverts went viral and outraged citizens complained. A young workers flash mob protested outside the Parliament and politicians called for action against the agency. The head of the fake agency then organised a press conference. Instead of the fictitious head of a fake agency it was the leaders of the union there revealing that they had used the trick to highlight the widespread denial of rights to young and women workers.

It was an important example of how social media and new technologies can be used to involve younger people and how it is important to mix online and offline techniques. It led to a large rise in younger members joining and being active in the union and a change in the perception that the union did not take such issues seriously.

In the Netherlands the unions ran a campaign to address problems with the minimum wage for people under 23. They conducted surveys using an app among young workers in dozens of workplaces, followed it up with a Facebook petition and then launched the public phase of the campaign – organising numerous events such as a sit-in in affected workplaces, using provocative messages contrasting the pay of the head of the company with young workers pay - for example one demonstrated the chairman would earn the same salary one of the workers would in a year in just 12 seconds or that it would take a worker 298 years to earn his annual salary. The union organised an intervention at the annual shareholders meeting and a delegation handed over a petition to the minister of social affairs, among many other actions.

Instead of only a top-down approach, the campaign gave room to youth-led activism by escalating direct action, giving young people the confidence that their own contribution could make a difference to achieving a better regulation of the labour market. The campaign engaged them based on like-by-like recruitment, but did not address the young workers as an age-defined group. Instead, by focusing on the youth minimum wage, a collective identity was forged based on a direct workplace issue that matters to them today.

Making heavy use of social media, this issue-based campaign seemed effective at tapping into youth networks by using a language, visuals and messages that appealed to young people; it presented a different public image of unions. There are numerous other examples of this type of campaign, but the key is to focus on issues that affect the working lives of women or younger members.

Many younger workers admitted to a lack of knowledge about what trade unions did and achieved but wanted to know. The easiest way is through the message and experience of other younger or women work-
ers. Different unions have taken
different steps from nominating
an Executive Committee member
to head their work with younger
members to setting up young
workers groups to young work-
ers conferences. The key is to
overcome the perceived lack of
attention of unions to the issues
affecting women and young
workers and to be able to deliv-
er education and awareness rais-
ing initiatives.

And this point also feeds in to
the next one. It is essential t o
give more of a voice to younger
members and listen to and act
on what they have to say. Many
unions establish structures or set
up committees but it is simply a
cosmetic exercise. The groups
have no power and there is no
real influence on union policy.
Whilst many union leaders are
reluctant to share power, it is
vital we listen and act on the
issues and concerns being raised
by women and younger mem-
bers. We need to create spaces
for youth and women's empow-
erment.

In the NUJ in the UK the union
has a student conference which
elects their own representatives,
can submit motions to the full
union congress.

And crucially if we are to give
more of a voice we also have to
make it easier for young workers
to be involved in our unions.
Don’t expect they will always
turn up to a long and bureau-
cratic committee meetings. Find
new ways to engage them in
participatory democracy, camp-
paign committees and more
informal ways of engagement.

If necessary, unions should
address their own current
statutes and representation struc-
tures. Their current set-up might
act as an obstacle to union mem-
bership for those workers fre-
quently changing employment
status and for women especially
who still bear the largest respon-
sibility for looking after the fami-
ly.

Think about where you organise
activities, at what time, are there
provisions for childcare or ways
to ensure people can get to and
from the meeting in safety.

As part of that review unions
also need to consider their fees
structure. Free or reduced-price
introductory membership is a
way to recognise low pay and
encourage people to take the
initial step of joining the union.
Many unions now have a stu-
dent membership category, cate-
gories for part-time workers who
are overwhelmingly female, cat-
egories for those working in
more precarious situations.

And it is no good having all the
best ideas if no-one hears about
them...and so the final key point
is to improve communication
with younger – not in a patronis-
ing way but by opening up
spaces for peer to peer commu-
ication, making better use of
social media and interactive
sites. In the study a recurrent
answer from young workers is
that trade unions speak a differ-
ent language. It is important that
we show empathy towards their
situation using a new language,
more familiar with and closer to
their ways of communicating.

For example, younger workers
said they would be more attract-
ed by short video clips or anima-
tions that could be shared online
rather than written commu-
niques, by direct action over
committee meetings.

There are many things we can
do - and we must if our unions
are to survive and address the
challenge of the digital econo-
my.