IFJ – State of Play of Unions' Initiatives to Combat Online Harassment and Media Best Practices

Questionnaire 1 – "Union's Initiatives to Combat Online Harassment"

ANALYSIS

This online survey was sent by the IFJ to its member unions and associations of journalists to identify their experience, best practices and needs in the handling of online harassment and abuse against women journalists and media workers, and in supporting their members effectively to ensure the online and offline safety of the employees.

<u>**Main findings**</u>

- **56 journalists' unions or associations who are members of the IFJ** and **three journalists' associations who are not members of the IFJ** responded to the questionnaire.
- **49 countries** were represented, a majority of them in **Europe**.
- Respondents occupy different **representative or management positions** in their organisation.
- **Few** organisations claimed they negotiated **provisions against online abuse in collective agreements or other types of agreement** (16%)[1], namely Flemish Association of Journalists (Belgium), Bosnia-Herzegovina Journalists' Association, Unifor (Canada), Union of Journalists in Finland, Gambia Press Union, Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate (Iraq-Kurdistan Region), Independent Trade Union of Macedonian Journalists and Media Workers (North Macedonia), Journalists' Group in FeSMC-UGT (Spain) and National Union of Journalists (United Kingdom and Ireland).
- Almost 3/4 of respondents indicated that **online harassment against women journalists** was a **priority** for their organisation.
- **Unions and journalists' associations said they supported media** in raising awareness about **legal tools**, **training on digital safety** and **adopting guidelines** to prevent online harassment, but 14% of respondents indicated that their organisation didn't provide any support at all.
- 79% of respondents said they **were aware of cases of online harassment or abuse** against their members.
- The unions and associations mainly provided **public support and legal assistance** to the affected journalists. Only 2% couldn't provide any support to journalists who asked for it.
- A majority of the unions and associations (63%) said they **didn't adopt a protocol or a mechanism** that allows women journalists and media workers to report online abuse and be

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[1] In this report, statistics will be presented as follows: percentages will be rounded to one or two significant digits. For precise results to two decimals, see Annex 1 containing the responses to the questionnaire.

supported and protected in such cases. But 37% of them have adopted such protocols, although not all knew what they consisted of. The **IFJ's protocol to combat harassment**, the **International Press Institute's Protocol** and the **International Labour Organisation Convention C190** on gender-based violence and harassment in the field of work were used as references for the elaboration of such protocols.

- Some respondents mentioned a **range of measures** taken by their organisations to deal with online violence, such as protection codes/guidelines, establishment of a national committee for the safety of journalists, online mapping or database of the cases, index of physical security and platform to report attacks. Others referred to various mechanisms that were not exclusively dedicated to online violence nor to violence against women journalists, such as an **online platform** and a **free media help line** to report attacks, and a **free legal help line** to receive legal counselling.

- Less than half of the organisations (42%) claimed that they provided support to journalists and media workers regardless of their **professional status** (employee, freelancers, trainee, etc.). 5% of them applied measures, protocol and mechanisms differently depending on the professional status, whereas 40% didn't adopt any measures at all. A couple of respondents emphasised the **role unions could play in supporting freelancers targeted online** thus compensating for the lack of support from media houses to freelancers.

- A majority of organisations (63%) advocated for the adoption and ratification of the **International Labour Organisation Convention C190 and its Recommendation R206 on gender-based violence and harassment in the field of work**. Despite the IFJ campaign on the matter, a quarter of respondents were not aware of it, and 12% didn't support it.

- **Prevention initiatives** that should be prioritised by unions and associations included training on digital safety and legal tools, guidelines for the media and collective agreement provisions.

- In terms of **support and reporting** of online violence cases, organisations should provide more **information on existing legal provisions** (including the ILO Convention C190) and **samples of protocols** already in place in media around the world, **collective agreements** and **national initiatives** to combat online violence. They should also concentrate on **educational initiatives** and raising public awareness of the potential dangers, especially the psychological implications of online abuse on social platforms.

Methodology

The IFJ distributed the survey via SurveyMonkey in its three official languages (English, French and Spanish) to its affiliates (unions and associations of journalists). The survey was open for three weeks from mid-December 2021 to early January 2022 and consisted of 13 questions. The first two questions related to demographic and professional data and focused on the name of the respondent, the name of the organisation, their function in the organisation, the country and the region of the respondent. The rest of the questions were structured as 10 closed questions (yes/no answers or multiple answers allowed), of which 6 allowed the respondent to add or comment on an answer, and one open question that enabled respondents to provide qualitative input (content or web link). The questions weren't organised in sections. Nevertheless, in order to organise the results presentation, we have suggested some.

Results

A majority of responses from Europe

The questionnaire was filled out by **59 respondents (56 journalists' unions or associations members of the IFJ and three journalists' associations non-members of the IFJ)** who are **present in 49 countries**. The survey shows an over-representation of respondents located in **Europe** (28 countries, 47%) followed equally by **Africa** and **Latin American and the Caribbean** (10 countries, 17%), Asia and the Pacific (6 countries, 10%), Middle East and the Arab World (3 countries, 5%) and North America (2 countries, 3%). It is partly explained by the fact that five countries had respondents from two different unions or associations (Belgium, France, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine) and another one had respondents from five organisations (Spain). In the other regions, only one country also has two respondents (Sri Lanka).

The respondents held **different representative or management positions** in their union or association: president, general secretary, board member, director or specialist, head of division and commission (including equality, international affairs), project manager or researcher, programme officer, manager assistant, legal adviser, chairperson, reporter, delegate, executive, coordinator.

The survey looked at the initiatives launched by journalists' unions and associations and what needs should be met to prevent and report cases of online harassment against women journalists, and provide support to journalists. Particular attention was given to collective bargaining and the inclusion of measures against online harassment into other types of agreements.

Few collective agreements address online abuse

The respondents were firstly asked <u>whether their organisation negotiated provisions against online abuse in collective agreements or other types of agreement</u> (Q3, one respondent skipped that question). Nine out of 58 respondents said that their organisations had negotiated such provisions or collective agreements **(16%)**: Flemish Association of Journalists (Belgium), Bosnia-Herzegovina Journalists' Association, Unifor (Canada), Union of Journalists in Finland, Gambia Press Union, Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate (Iraq-Kurdistan Region), Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (North Macedonia), Journalists' Group in FeSMC-UGT (Spain) and National Union of Journalists (United Kingdom and Ireland).

The respondents could <u>describe the type of agreement, the provisions and add a link to the agreement if accessible online</u> (Q4, 12 respondents). The question was understood in a broad sense, which led to the inclusion of any measures set up to fight against online harassment, including debate, survey, study, legal reform, labour collective agreement, policy or procedure – as the following responses show:

- 'There is a provision in the collective agreement that outlines the responsibility of the employer to act in severe situations regarding occupational safety, and online abuse belongs to this category' (Union of Journalists in Finland)
- 'Provisions are negotiated against all forms of abuse or harassment, including this one' (Agrupación de Periodistas de FeSMC-UGT, Spain, translated from Spanish)
- 'Work currently in train at Reach plc and BBC' (National Union of Journalists, United Kingdom and Ireland)
- 'Changes in criminal code' (Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers, North Macedonia)
- 'The debate is part of a bigger debate with regard to constitutional reform' (Flemish Association of Journalists, Belgium)
- 'BH Journalists Association is in the process to develop a policy and procedure against online abuse' (Bosnia-Herzegovina Journalists' Association)
- 'We conducted a survey about female journalist online harassment' (Kurdistan Journalist Syndicate, Iraq and Kurdistan Region)

- 'I believe we have some draft model language we're working on, but we haven't bargained it yet' (Unifor, Canada)
- 'The Gambia Press Union conducted a study on sexual harassment and formulated a policy on sexual harassment that tries to address online abuse. Some media houses use the policy as a guide to addressing sexual harassment' (Gambia Press Union). The main recommendations of the Gambia Press Union consisted in raising awareness about the local and international legal documents, in monitoring gender units dedicated to tackle sexual harassment cases in each media organisation, and in ensuring 'that each media organization produces a formal document on conditions of service for employees to serve as a point of reference in the bid to enhance a just and fair system of reward and sanctions in the workplace.[2]

Online harassment, a priority for unions and associations of journalists

When asked about the priority level given to online harassment against women journalists in the action of their organisation (Q5), **73%** of the respondents indicated that this issue was a priority (21 respondents), a high priority (17 respondents) or the highest priority (5 respondents), whereas the remaining 27% of respondents answered that this issue was not a priority although it has already been mentioned (15 respondents), or not a priority at all (one respondent, the Association of Professional Journalists of Albania). The responses were as follows:

- Priority, the topic is in discussion (21 respondents, 36%)
- High priority, there is a work in progress regarding this topic (17 respondents, 29%)
- Not a priority, but the topic has been mentioned (15 respondents, 25%)
- Highest priority, measures have been taken (protocol, campaigns, collective agreements with specific provisions against violence (5 respondents, 8%)
- Not a priority, this topic is not discussed (1 respondent, 2%)

Out of the fifteen respondents who reported that online harassment was not a priority for their organisations although it had been mentioned, most were located in Europe (6 respondents, 40%), followed by Asia and Latin America (each 3 respondents, 20%), Africa, the Middle East and Arab World, and North America (one respondent each, 7%). As European organisations are over-represented in the survey, these data don't provide a clear picture for any regional lack of interest in online harassment.

When measures have been taken (protocol, campaigns, collective agreements with specific provisions against violence), the following references were made:

- 'We **map online intimidation cases** (& provide **support**) via https://journalist.be/2019/03/vvj-richt-meldpunt-in-voor-agressie-tegen-journalisten, we developed a **toolkit**, see https://journalist.be/2020/04/een-vuist-tegen-online-intimidatie, we provide **training on cyber security**, **participation in debates** & academic **research**' (Flemish Association of Journalists, Belgium)
- 'The process is ongoing with **training** and **knowledge sharing** on that issue' (SINJOTECS - Union of Journalists and Social Communication Technicians in Guinea-Bissau, translated from Portuguese)
- 'We've been running a **union campaign on safety**; are involved in the UK **government's National Committee for the Safety of Journalists**; and will be launching new **union-wide**

[2] Gambia Press Union (August 2020). Research Report on Sexual Harassment and Discrimination in Media Agencies in the Gambia.
https://gpu.gm//DataImages/PDFFiles/Resume_0_GPU%20Research%20Report%20on%20the%20Sexual%20Harassment%20and%20Discrimination%20in%20Media%20Agencies%20in%20the%20Gambia.pdf

initiatives in 2022 as part of that Action Plan including an **online safety toolkit**' (National Union of Journalists, United Kingdom and Ireland)

- 'We have a **website section** under construction on this, it should be launched in the coming weeks' (Unifor, Canada)
- The **Trade Union of Croatian Journalists** and the Croatian Journalists' Association called on the media to take part in the **#zajednobezrznje campaign**[3] to alert about hate speech in public and denounce verbal and physical attacks against journalists, cameramen and photojournalists. Almost all media joined the campaign to call for responsible behaviour and public condemnation of hate speech.
- The **German Journalists' Association** (Deutscher Journalisten-Verband)[4] took part in the elaboration of a **Protection Code** (Schutzkodex) for threatened journalists and media workers, launched by an alliance of journalists' organisations, media unions and advisory institutions in April 2021[5]. Media outlets who signed up to the code agreed to implement certain standards and practical measures to protect journalists and media workers, employees and freelancers and their families, in particular in cases of online violence: setting up a resource person who has a clearing house function and organises all support steps, appointment of an in-house contact person in charge of dealing with hate emails, in-house legal counselling , IT services, etc. (*more details in the forthcoming Mapping document*)
- The **Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia**[6] carried out **research** based on a **database compiling attacks and pressures on journalists** in 2020 including threat messages, insults and pressure on social media, that aimed to characterise online attacks against female journalists. General recommendations were made to all stakeholders who have a role in ensuring journalists' safety. In particular, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia recommends to journalists' associations to maintain constant contact with their female members and to train them in digital safety and how to report and monitor the cases (by periodical meetings with journalists, police officers and prosecutors, etc.); to raise the government and parliamentary bodies awareness on the issue; to prepare a manual for journalists about online attacks; and to make proposals to improve journalists' protection (digital safety, digital literacy, reporting mechanisms, etc.)[7].
- The **Gambia Press Union** (GPU) held several trainings on gender and sexual harassment for editors, producers, senior managers, reporters and presenters to sensitize them on gender, sexual harassment and discrimination[8]. One of this training session "involved scrutinising the sexual harassment policy with a view to make it more responsive before its adoption by the GPU"[9] and its promotion in the newsrooms. GPU also relies on the Women Journalists' Association of the

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[3] https://www.snh.hr/zajednobezmrznje (in Croatian)

[4] https://www.djv.de/startseite/info/themen-wissen/schutzkodex-journalistinnen-vor-gewalt-und-bedrohungen-schuetzen (in German)

[5] Deutscher Journalisten Verband, Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen, RSF-Reporter Ohne Grenzen et al. (2021). Journalist*innen vor Gewalt und Bedrohungen schützen. Kodex für Medienhäuser. Deutscher Journalisten Verband. https://www.djv.de/fileadmin/user_upload/INFOS/20210415_Schutz_Kodex_Massnahmenkatalog.pdf (in German)

[6] Djuric R., Jovic N. (Feb. 2021). Online Attacks on Female Journalists. Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS). https://nuns.rs/media/2021/02/onlajn-napadi-na-novinarke-EN.pdf

[7] Djuric R., Jovic N. (Feb. 2021). Online Attacks on Female Journalists. Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS). https://nuns.rs/media/2021/02/onlajn-napadi-na-novinarke-EN.pdf. p.43-44.

[8] GPU (Nov 17 2020). "Review and validation of sexual harassment research findings and policy". https://gpu.gm/News/Details/53

[9] Dem F. (Dec. 9 2019). "15 journalists trained on sexual harassment". The Point. https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/15-journalists-trained-on-sexual-harassment

Gambia for the organisation of training sessions and the implementation of a UNESCO-funded project 'Breaking gender barriers' in the media[10].

- The **Bosnia-Herzegovina Journalists' Association** (BH Novinari)[11] has, since 2003, run a **Free Media Help Line** and invites all journalists (members and non-members of the BH Novinari) to report any attacks, threats or obstruction in the performance of their journalistic duties[12]. Following its first conference on the position and protection of women journalists (May 2019), the Female Journalists Network in Bosnia-Herzegovina was established to develop mechanisms to combat more effectively[13] gender-based violence targeting women journalists. BH Novinari provides legal assistance and psychosocial help. The association publishes papers and surveys related to gender and media, in particular gender-based violence against women journalists. The Female Journalists Network joined the **international campaign of the IFJ** for the **adoption of the ILO Convention C190** and will pressure the competent political and legislative authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska to take appropriate measures in order to ensure the ratification of the ILO Convention C190.

- The **National Union of Journalists of Ukraine** (NUJU)[14] set up with other international partners the **Index of Physical Security** to monitor attacks against journalists. NUJU hosted an **expert discussion** about 'Current issues of security facing women journalists in Ukraine' (July 22, 2021) and presented the results of a **survey** on that issue. Online attacks and bullying on social networks were the main security problems facing media workers.

- The Slovene Association of Journalists hosts the **Platform 'Report an attack'** which 'is intended for reporting physical attacks and threats, verbal attacks that go beyond argumentative criticism of a journalist's work.'[15] Journalists, editors and other media workers, but also friends or students can report to the Platform for themselves or another person. After being reviewed, the report of the attack made public and visible on the Platform. The Platform also documents **the characteristics of the attacks** and **raises public awareness** on the spectrum of violence against women journalists. The Slovene Association of Journalists published various **resources** related to online violence against journalists[16], including monitoring attacks on journalists[17], recommendations to improve the protection of journalists and NGOs[18], communication response in case of online attacks on journalists[19]; instructions for journalists, who are victims of threats and attacks (legal response)[20]; IPI protocol[21].

- In contrast to other unions who tackle (online) violence against women journalists from the perspective of violence against journalists in general, the **Federation of Journalists' Unions in Spain** approaches online violence against women journalists as a specific case of violence against

[10] Tamba A. (Dec. 5 2019). "GPU prexy urges female journalists to expose sexual harassment at work". The Standard, https://standard.gm/gambia-%20news/gpu-prexy-urges-female-journalists-to-expose-sexual-harassment-at-work

[11] https://bhnovinari.ba/en/category/femalejournalistnetwork/(in Bosnian)

[12] https://bhnovinari.ba/bs/linija-za-pomoc (in Bosnian)

[13]https://bhnovinari.ba/en/2019/12/06/e-journalist-female-journalists-in-bih-professional-occupation-as-justification-for-assaults-attacks-insults-offences-swearing-threats-and-sexism (in Bosnian)

[14] https://nsju.org/novini/bezpeka-zhinok-zhurnalistok-narizhnyj-kamin-demokratiyi/ (in Ukrainian)

[15] https://novinar.com/prijavi-napad (translated from Slovene)

[16] https://novinar.com/drustvo-novinarjev-slovenije/projekti/publikacije (in Slovene)

[17] https://novinar.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Zakljucno-porocilo_Spremljanje_napadov2.pdf (in Slovene)

[18] https://novinar.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Sistemska-priporocila.pdf (in Slovene)

[19] https://novinar.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Komunikacijski_odziv_v_primeru_spletnih_napadov.pdf (in Slovene)

[20] https://novinar.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Navodila-za-novinarje-žrtve-groženj-napadov.pdf (in Slovene)

[21] https://novinar.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Protokol_IPI_za_odziv_na_spletno_nadlegovanje.pdf (in Slovene)

women, hence its **advocacy campaign on the government for the ratification of ILO Convention C190 on Violence against women**[22]

Legal tools, digital safety and guidelines: main supports provided by unions and associations

When asked about the type of support provided by their organisation to the media in order to elaborate prevention measures that limit online harassment and raise awareness of this phenomenon (Q6), eight respondents **(14%)** indicated that their organisation provided no such support to the media. The remaining respondents mentioned the following responses (multiple answers allowed):

- Awareness raising about the **legal tools** available for journalists and media workers who are facing online harassment (32 respondents, 54%)
- Support for professional **training about digital security and personal safety**, and the resources available on the issue (safety training organised by associations of journalists or digital actors, tips, existing mechanisms for reporting abuse to the digital platforms and social networks, etc.) (29 respondents, 49%)
- Support to adopt **guidelines** related to online harassment in collaboration with employees, unions and associations of journalists (28 respondents, 47%)
- Support to set up appropriate **guidelines and standards for the online moderation of comments**, sensitive to misogyny, sexism, homo/lesbo/transphobia, racism, religious hate and other forms of discrimination (12 respondents, 20%)
- Support to set up **online moderation teams** that are gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive (8 respondents, 14%)
- Support for setting up a **section on the media website**, a **help desk**, a cyber cell, an **alarm number or email** or relevant resources dedicated to prevent and react to online harassment (6 respondents, 10%)

Unions and associations are aware of online harassment and support their members

When asked whether they were aware of cases of online harassment or abuse against their members (Q7), a majority of 46 respondents out of 58 were aware of cases of online harassment **(79%,** one respondent skipped that question), but not all of them were able to confirm whether these cases were reported. The following responses were received:

- 23 respondents declared that they were aware, and knew of cases that were reported (40%)
- 13 respondents declared that they were aware and knew of cases that weren't reported (22%)
- 12 respondents declared that they were not aware of such cases (21%)
- 10 respondents declared that they were aware, but didn't know whether the cases were reported (17%)

When asked about the type of support their organisation provided when a member reported a case of online harassment or abuse (Q8, 3 respondents skipped that question), with multiple answers allowed, **public support and legal assistance** stood out from the other answers:

- Public support to the harassed journalist (36 respondents, 64%)
- Legal assistance (reporting to the police, complaint on behalf of the member) (27 respondents, 48%)
- Financial support (lawyer and counselling costs, work interruption) (8 respondents, 14%)
- Basic medical and/or psychological support, including employment support (7 respondents, 13%)

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[22] https://fesperiodistas.org/erradicar-la-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-tambien-la-ejercida-contra-las-periodistas (in Spanish)

- Access to safe space and trained staff to support and advise (7 respondents, 13 %)

The above-mentioned shouldn't overshadow the fact that around a quarter of respondents said there were no reported cases, their organisation could not provide support, or they did not know.

- There has been no such case reported yet (12 respondents, 21%)
- The organisation could not assist although the journalist or media worker asked for support (1 respondent, 2%)
- I don't know (1 respondent, 2%)

Sixteen respondents <u>confirmed or clarified one of the above options</u> in an open answer (29%) including:

- 'We have **union reps** that walk the affected union member through a company policy on online harassment at one workplace only. I don't believe the language is in the collective agreement' (Unifor, Canada)
- 'We link them with the **Media Council of Tanzania** who provide an **assistant** to the affected journalists' (Journalists Workers Union of Tanzania)
- 'There is a **separate fund**, established by the Union and other relevant organisations, that provides financial support in these cases' (Union of Journalists in Finland)
- 'Legal advice' (Journalists' Union, Portugal)
- '**Free** psychological support/ aid' (Bosnia-Herzegovina Journalists' Association)
- 'The SNJ participates in legal proceedings and files a complaint on behalf of the union' (National Union of Journalists, France, translated from French)
- 'We issued a **statement** condemning these acts' (National Press Union in Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, translated from French)
- 'Our policy serves as a guide for seeking redress for sexual harassment which includes online abuse' (Gambia Press Union)
- '**Raising awareness** by media workers on the best attitudes to adopt in case of aggression and exhortation to denounce any situation of aggression' (Union of Independent Journalists in Togo, translated from French)
- 'So far we have no cases in this regard, but we are aware of the potential risks of harassment, which is why we have made this a priority issue for action, through **training and knowledge sharing**' (Union of Journalists and Social Communication Technicians in Guinea-Bissau, translated from Portuguese)
- 'It is clear that journalists complain about the behaviour of colleagues or officials, but this is never publicised. At least not to my knowledge' (National Union of Journalists of Mali, translated from French)

A majority of organisations didn't adopt protocols or mechanisms, but when they did, all workers have the access to them

The next questions deepened the previous one on the support provided by journalists' unions and associations, by asking more specifically about their adoption of protocols and mechanisms, and their availability to all types of journalists. When asked whether <u>their organisation adopted a protocol or a mechanism that allows women journalists and media workers to report online abuse and be supported and protected in such cases</u> (Q9, two respondents skipped that question), a majority of respondents answered negatively **(63%)**. A few respondents knew that there was a protocol, but they didn't know what it was (7%) while 30% of them could describe its provisions. Responses were as follows:

- According to 36 respondents, there was no protocol or mechanism (63%)

- According to 4 respondents, there was a protocol but they couldn't describe it (7%)
- According to 17 respondents, there was a protocol and they could describe it (30%)

To these last ones, the option was given to <u>describe the protocol or to recommend a link</u> for further details. The following responses were collected:

- 'It is a protocol that was discussed on the basis of the **IFJ's protocol** to combat harassment. Our Gender Secretariat managed to get this approved in the Executive Committee and the organisation is also part of the 'Grupo Impulsor' in Peru to approve **ILO Convention 190**, which will be a good tool against harassment' (National Association of Journalists in Peru, translated from Spanish)
- '**ILO 190 Convention**' (Journalists' Union of Turkey)
- 'This work is ongoing (based on the **IPI protocol**)' (Association of Professional Journalists, Belgium, translated from French)
- 'A **protocol** is being put in place for dealing with cases of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence. Victims of cyber-harassment can therefore follow the same protocol. Activists trained to listen to victims receive requests for help by email or via the union's national switchboard. Pairs are assigned to listen to the victim. Depending on the situation, contact is made with the company's activists, legal support is possible and contact is made with associations. Support is more extensive if the victim is a member of the union' (National Union of Journalists, France, translated from French)
- '**Online platform (**novinar.com/prijavi-napad) is not intended only for women journalists though' (Slovene Association of Journalists)
- 'It is the decision to provide free legal and psychological support to journalists who are victims of violence in the online and offline spheres. This decision regulates the procedures conducted by the **Free Media Helpline**, as part of the BH Journalists Association' (Bosnia-Herzegovina Journalists' Association)
- 'We have a **free legal help line** and also **link with the police and prosecutor's office.** When the online threats occur the journalist can contact our legal officers and they will explain to them how to collect evidence, they will take all necessary info from the journalist and send to the police and prosecutor for criminal charges' (Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia)
- 'Journalists should contact the union for **guidance and legal assistance**. Union and Federation gives **public support** to journalists' (National Federation of Journalists, Brazil, translated from Spanish)
- 'We are now working on **SOP for sexual violence cases for internal organisation** and the SOP will be familiarised with all members of AJI Indonesia.' (The Alliance of Independent Journalists, Indonesia)
- 'We encourage all members to report cases - to employers, involving workplace NUJ reps; also to police and to the union' (National Union of Journalists, United Kingdom and Ireland)
- 'Such journalists can contact me or the President of SLWJA at any time and report about the incidents. Actions are taken immediately, such as lodging complaints to police, reporting the incident to the Minister of Mass Media and other relevant authorities, on behalf of the victims. If proper actions are not taken by them, SLWJA does not hesitate to urge the Government and other relevant authorities to do the needful' (Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association)
- 'We have done two **national studies** on sexual harassment in the newsroom (2017 and 2019)' (Norwegian Union of Journalists)

Two comments to the next question (Q10) actually related to Q9, so they have also been listed here:

- 'We don't have reporting/tracking mechanisms for our union, but we are financially supporting a **Press Freedom Tracker project** for Canada and we've asked that they include online harassment cases in their tracking of press freedom violations' (Unifor, Canada).
- 'We have launched **Forums on the issues of bullying and harassment**' (Union of Journalists in Costa Rica, translated from Spanish)

Also, when asked whether the measures, protocol or mechanisms apply in the same way to all their members, regardless of the journalist's status (employee, freelance, trainee or correspondent) (Q10, 2 respondents skipped that question), the same proportion answered that the journalist's status didn't play a role in the level of support they received as those who responded that their organisation didn't have any supportive measures (40%). Only 5 % of respondents reported that a different status implied a different access to the support measures. The following replies were received:

- 24 respondents answered positively - that status was not a factor in being able to receive support (42%)
- 23 respondents indicated that they didn't have such measures (40%)
- 3 respondents answered negatively - that there were differences in the level of support based on status (5%)
- 2 respondents didn't know (4%)

The opportunity was also given to add a comment to this question. One respondent highlighted the potential **role of the union towards freelance journalists**: 'The aim is to create such a protocol in the media, and to provide one for freelancers within the professional union, if the media does not pay enough attention to its freelancers' (Association of Professional Journalists, Belgium, translated from French). Another one insisted on the fact that 'freelancers are not part of the collective bargaining recognition agreements; although we still take up their cases with engagers and also legally/with police' (National Union of Journalists, United Kingdom and Ireland).

International Labour Organisation Convention C190 well supported… But more advocacy needed

When asked whether their organisation advocates for the adoption and ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention C190 and its Recommendation R206 on gender-based violence and harassment in the field of work, as a legal tool to fight against online harassment targeted at women journalists and media workers (Q11, 2 respondents skipped that question), a large majority of respondents confirmed the support of their organisation to the promotion of ILO Convention C190 **(63%)** . Despite the IFJ campaign on the adoption and ratification of this international convention, 14 members acknowledged their ignorance about it, which represents twice the amount of organisations that don't support the adoption and ratification of it (7 respondents). The following responses were received:

- 36 respondents answered positively (63%)
- 14 respondents were not aware of this convention (25%)
- 7 respondents answered negatively (12%)

Digital safety, legal tools, guidelines and collective agreements are the most needed initiatives in terms of prevention

When asked which initiatives would their organisation prioritise in terms of **prevention** of online harassment at work (Q12) with multiple answers allowed, respondents gave priority to training on digital safety and legal tools (more than 70% of support), followed by guidelines for the media and collective agreement provisions (more than 50% of support). The following responses were received:

- Training on **digital security** and personal safety (48 respondents, 81%)
- **Legal tools** available for journalists and media workers who are facing online harassment (42 respondents, 71%)
- **Guidelines** on how to handle online harassment in collaboration with media employers and employees (32 respondents, 54%)
- **Collective agreements** that provide a "zero tolerance" approach towards online abuse in newsrooms (31 respondents, 53%)
- Special section on media website, help desk, cyber cell, **alarm** number or email dedicated to prevent and react to online harassment (23 respondents, 39%)
- Guidelines and standards for the **online moderation of comments**, sensitive to misogyny, sexism, homo/lesbo/transphobia, racism, religious hate and other forms of discrimination (21 respondents, 36%)
- **Online moderation teams** that are gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive (14 respondents, 24%)

Legal provisions, protocols, public awareness and collective agreements to support and report online abuse

When asked which initiatives would be considered most appropriate in terms of **support and reporting** of online harassment cases (Q13), with multiple initiatives allowed, respondents expressed their interest in the majority of the proposed initiatives (**between 48% and 66%**), as following:

- Information on existing **legal provisions** available to tackle online abuse (38 respondents, 64%)
- Samples of **protocols** already in place in media around the world that address online abuse (38 respondents, 64%)
- Raising **public awareness** of the potential dangers of online abuse on social platforms (36 respondents, 61%)
- Samples of **collective agreements** that address online harassment of media workers (35 respondents, 59%)
- Information on existing national campaigns for the adoption and ratification of the **International Labour Organisation Convention C190** and its Recommendation R206 on gender-based violence and harassment in the field of work, including online abuse (33 respondents, 56%)
- Better **understanding of psychological implications** of online abuse on media staff (31 respondents, 53%)
- Alliances, **national agreement** or common front against harassment with involvement of political actors, research centres, organisations for gender equality and digital communication, etc. (31 respondents, 53%)
- **Peer support** put in place in newsrooms (sorting through comments, documentation of the abuse cases, screenshots of hate speech, report of litigious accounts, etc.) (29 respondents, 49%)
- Improve **facilities on digital platforms** and social networks to report harassment cases (SOS Button) and enter into safer modes (29 respondents, 49%)
- Increase **responsibility and accountability of digital platforms** and social networks in the handling of privacy and data protection and online abuse claims (28 respondents, 47%)
- Other (5 respondents, 8%)

Respondents also had the option to suggest other initiatives (8%, including one blank answer). Two respondents highlighted the role governments and the justice system should play in supporting journalists targeted by online violence, especially in reporting and prosecuting the cases. Education initiatives should also receive more attention, from the authorities and through audio-visual productions. The following were mentioned:

- 'SINJOTECS assumes that extensive efforts are needed to eradicate this practice of sexual harassment online, **government authorities** must participate in this process, using their resources to identify offenders and bring them to **justice**, **educate** and sensitise media professionals to discourage this practice' (Union of Journalists and Social Communication Technicians in Guinea-Bissau, translated from Portuguese)
- '**Advocacy with governments** to strengthen hi-tech law enforcement agencies to prosecute harassment and not trivialise cases' (National Association of Journalists in Peru, translated from Spanish)
- '**Audiovisual productions** broadcast to denounce, **educate**, train, advise and accompany people who have been harassed' (Union of Journalists in Costa Rica, translated from Spanish)
- 'More training for journalists to be able to protect themselves against the psychological effects of online abuse; and establish **editorial guidelines** to tackle online abuse' (Gambia Press Union)

Comments and recommendations

About 30% of the IFJ members answered the online survey (56 members over 187, according to the IFJ website, and three non-members journalists' associations) which is a reasonable ratio for a survey. On the basis of their responses, some preliminary recommendations have emerged, as follows.

The survey has clearly demonstrated the involvement of journalists' unions and associations in addressing online abuse against journalists. According to the statistics, 73% of them indicated that this issue was a priority for their organisation. While the high percentage of organisations giving priority to online harassment is welcomed, awareness-raising is needed for the organisations for which online harassment against women journalists is not a priority (27%), although the topic has been mentioned (15 respondents including 6 from Europe, 25%) or because it hasn't even been discussed (1 respondent from Albania, 2%). Also, although 79% of the respondents were aware of cases of online violence against journalists from their organisation, over a third of the respondents were not aware of cases of online violence, or were aware but didn't know if these cases had been reported. This might suggest improving **the data collection, its internal communication, and the publication to a larger audience**.

Lack of collective agreements and provisions to tackle online abuse

One of the main findings of the survey is that only a few organisations have negotiated provisions against online abuse in collective agreements or other types of agreements (16%). This result **shows the urgent need to share those agreements and their provisions for handling online abuse among IFJ affiliates**, especially to the 84% of the respondents who indicated that their organisation didn't negotiate any provisions against online abuse in collective agreements or other types of agreement. The cases of the **provisions against online harassment negotiated by the journalists' unions from Finland, Spain and UK and Ireland should be shared as good examples of collective negotiation**

A call for protocols in unions, associations and media

Despite their awareness of cases of online abuse and the priority given to this issue, a majority of the organisations (63%) **didn't adopt a protocol or a mechanism** that allows women journalists and media workers to report online abuse and be supported and protected in such cases. When those who did have such protocols were asked to describe them, respondents gave a diversity of responses, from protocol references to concrete tools, such as an online platform to report abuse cases and free helplines that provide legal assistance and psychological support.

The 37% of the organisations which have adopted such protocols mentioned **the ILO Convention C190, the International Press Institute Protocol and the IFJ Protocol to combat online harassment**[23] **as references** used to develop their protocols. **Awareness around ILO Convention C190 and Recommendation R206 should nevertheless be increased**. Indeed, despite the IFJ campaign on the adoption and ratification of the convention, 14 respondents (24%) acknowledged that they were not aware of this convention. The remaining answers seem to indicate that once the unions and associations are aware of the content of Convention C190, they are more likely to promote its adoption and ratification than not.

Despite a potential misunderstanding of the notions of protocols and mechanisms, respondents show the **need for a deeper automatisation or formalisation of the union or association's reaction in the case of online harassment. The IFJ could play a role by sharing the protocols and mechanisms already set up and by supporting the unions that are in the process of elaboration of such protocols**.

A call for legal reforms and awareness raising about the available legal tools

Case studies of **Belgium and Macedonia** should be conducted to **highlight advocacy and lobbying for a legal reform in matters of online abuse**. Unions in these countries are participating in the debates for a reform of, respectively, the Constitution and the criminal code to address more effectively online violence against journalists[24]. In addition, some legal provisions already exist to tackle violence at work, defamation, privacy, press offences, gender violence, harassment, etc., which are applicable to offline abuse and might be effective to address online abuse. **IFJ members should be encouraged to research the legal framework that covers issues of online violence and to raise awareness about the legal tools available for journalists and media workers who are facing online harassment or abuse or the need for legal reform.**

Unions support media with legal tools, digital safety and guidelines

The main support provided by unions or associations to the media consists in s**haring information about the legal tools** available, training about **digital safety**, and setting up **guidelines** in partnership with employees.

Unions provide their targeted members with public support, legal assistance and counselling

The principal types of support provided by the unions or associations to one of their members when a case of online violence is reported consist, first of all, in **public support to the journalist** (for example through a public statement condemning the abuse, where appripriate) and **legal assistance**, followed by **psycho-medical support** and **financial support**. According to less than half of the organisations (42%) , the **journalist's status** (employee, freelance, trainee, correspondent) doesn't make a difference in the support provided. Only three respondents (5%) mentioned that the measures or protocols didn't apply in the same way for all media workers, whereas 40% haven't adopted any measures at all. A couple of respondents emphasised the **role of unions towards freelancers, in supplying the support that is not provided by media houses to freelancers**.

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[23] https://samsn.ifj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ByteBack_CombatingOnlineHarassment.pdf

[24] In the Belgian case, an article of the Constitution is subject to revision with a view to reclassifying what is the expression of an opinion, and which can therefore potentially fall under the heading of press offences. In practice, this is almost synonymous with impunity when it comes to online insults. See: Milecan, G. (Nov. 2020). 'Liberté de la presse et délit de presse, un nouvel équilibre à trouver'. Mensuel Journalistes No.230. Brussels. Association des Journalistes Professionnels. http://www.ajp.be/telechargements/dossiers/230_dossier.pdf. p.4-5. (in French)

Need for a systematic handling of online violence and resources to prevent journalist's isolation

Respondents have expressed a strong interest in initiatives related to training on **digital safety**, and **legal tool**s, followed by **guidelines** for the media and **collective agreement provisions,** that **formalise and make systematic the handling of online harassment and abuse against women journalists and media workers**. A slightly lower level of support was shown to the setting up of an alarm tool and to the comment section moderation and team.

In terms of support and reporting the cases, respondents clearly confirmed the **need for more information (on legal tools, national or international) and for models to use as guidance (protocols, national campaigns)**. Initiatives that **prevent the isolation of the person and online violence are also required, such as peer support, public awareness and partnership between different stakeholders impacted by online violence, including governments, the justice system and educational actors**.

Initiatives related to online moderation (setting up of standards, guidelines and inclusive teams) didn't receive much support whether it was about existing support or appropriate measures to be taken. The absence of digital platforms as a relevant partner in the respondents' choices should also be noted. The main reason lies in the nature of the activities of journalists' unions and associations, but other reasons could be found in the artificial intelligence driven tools used to moderate the comment sections, the business models of media industry in the digital era, or the difficulty in making digital platforms accountable for the spread of hate speech and to involve them effectively in combating online violence against journalists.

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With the support of Union to Union