

Renate Schroeder, [European Federation of Journalists](#)

Thank you for having been invited on behalf of the European Federation of Journalists presenting about 300.000 journalists (freelance, staff, online, small digital start-ups etc - our membership is indeed getting more diverse with the enormous changes taking part in the information sector).

We agree with all points mentioned by the ETUC. Our sector and journalism in particular has been hit enormously by media concentration and now the digital transition has been badly influenced by the misuse of digital platform monopoly, its attention driven economy privileging toxic news to facts and independent journalism and their grabbing of advertisement and now of grabbing of content for generative AI.

Journalists are working under ever more precarious working conditions, and in particular freelance journalists who in several countries are more than half of union membership, suffer under the worst working conditions and very often cannot live anymore from their journalistic work. Huge brain drain Without freelancers no newsroom in Europe would survive. Quality jobs are very much needed in our sector, also if we wish to sustain a public interest journalism framework in which accuracy and facts matter and journalists can be fact checkers, so much needed to be prepared:-)

Our Freelance Expert group adopted earlier this year a Freelance declaration that *outlines the fundamental measures necessary to ensure fair working conditions, equal treatment and suitable livelihoods for freelance journalists across Europe. Through their independence, freelance journalists are vital to democracy and the free flow of information.*

- **Dignified Working Conditions for freelancers and eliminating fake or bogus freelancers to evade employment and social benefits**
- **Fair Compensation which includes** minimum fee guidelines and contractual standards that reflect the complexity, time investment, and value of their work.
- **Access to Social Protections**

- **Defense of Authors' Rights: fair remuneration is their pension** ensuring they are fairly compensated for all uses, including digital and AI-related applications.
- **Collective Bargaining Rights:** as set out in the European Commission Guidelines on the application of EU competition law to collective agreements . Trade unions and professional organisations must be empowered to negotiate on behalf of freelance journalists to improve working conditions and remuneration.
- **Safety and Professional Development:** Duty of care for media owners. Especially for freelancers who are often at the frontline. This includes training: safety training; training on AI etc!!! to technological advancements and maintain professional excellence.

And some good practice:

France: Historic collective agreement signed for online journalism

A groundbreaking collective agreement was signed by the French unions to set social and pay standards for online journalism. After two years of negotiations, the three unions and the Syndicat de la presse indépendante d'information en ligne (Spiil) have secured long-overdue protections for media workers in digital journalism.

This agreement introduces the first structured classification system and salary scale for Spiil members. Spiil represents 270 publishers, primarily independent press and digital outlets.

It sets out specific job functions, career progression models, and minimum salaries at each level. It ensures that career progression is based on expertise, not just managerial roles, and sets a minimum freelance rate. Its application from 1 September 2025 will provide crucial stability for thousands of freelancers and employed journalists. Especially for freelancers it is a major advance: they now have an enforceable text to defend their pay.” The next focus will be on strengthening protections for digital, audio, video, photo, and podcast freelancers.