



Official spring meeting of the Union Council
21 – 22.4.2004

Freelancer strategy for the Union of Journalists in Finland

Freelancers have a right to receive reasonable earnings for their work

- The goal is to ensure that a freelancer achieves the same income level as a colleague working in an employment relationship.
- The freelance budgets in companies must correspond to the amount of freelance work being commissioned.
- The costs placed on the employer for journalistic work must not be dependent on the type of working relationship.

Freelancers have a right to earnings-linked social security

- Legislation should ensure that freelance work is considered equal with others in terms of social security.
- UJF collaborates with various unions and trade organisations.

The supervision of the interests of freelancers is a common responsibility for the entire Union

- The supervision of the interests of freelancers must be seen as being as crucial to the operations of the Union as collective agreement issues.
- Regarding freelancers as cheap labour also threatens the benefits of journalists in employment relationships.
- Solidarity from employed colleagues is necessary for the supervision of the interests of freelancers.

The position of freelancers within the UJF must be improved

- Supervision of interests must be emphasised when freelancers get organised.
- Freelancers must have equal representation within the central bodies of the UJF.

Normal journalistic work, challenging supervision of interests

Freelance work is normal journalistic work, and the proportion of freelance work has been increasing. The basic dilemma is that some employers consider freelance work to be cheap labour for which the price to be paid is far from the minimum conditions of generally binding collective agreements. While the general income level has risen, freelancers' earnings have remained the same or even lowered.

As self-employed professionals, freelancers are in a weaker position than their colleagues in employment relationships in terms of social security. Due to an abundant workforce, low fees and inadequate social security, many freelancers find themselves at risk of marginalisation and facing poverty.

Challenges to the supervision of the interests of freelancers are posed by developing communications technologies, diversification of the employer field as well as increasingly centralized and internationalised ownership. This development also increases the demand for freelance work.

The majority of fulltime freelance journalists have organised within the Union of Journalists in Finland where they form an extensive and active membership chapter. UJF would like to stress that the supervision of the interests of freelancers is a common



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responsibility for the entire organisation, on every level of the union.

Just earnings – equal pay for equal work

For a freelancer, who is working as a self-employed or independent professional, approximately half of the invoicing constitutes personal taxable earnings, while the other half is used toward work-related expenses, training and holiday expenses as well as statutory payments that are the responsibility of the employer in an employment relationship. Being aware of this basic fact and taking it into consideration are the keys to rectifying the situation and increasing the income level of freelancers.

UJF is working to bring the freelance budgets and wages in media companies up to par.

Important measures to reach this aim include:

- providing freelancers with pricing recommendations and training to assist them in invoicing at the correct level
- keeping the issues pertaining to freelancers' fees at the forefront during negotiations with employers' organisations
- influencing the preparation and decision-making concerning companies' freelance budgets, both through direct contacts with the employers and locally through the editorial departments and shop stewards
- supervising adherence to the terms of the delivery and sales agreement signed by UJF and VTA (Viestintätyöntajat VTA ry) and to the Yhtyneet agreement
- arranging, together with employers, joint training that deals with general issues related to freelance work
- developing and, where possible, expanding the pilot house project and the network of contact personnel in order to bring about employer-specific contracts
- using publicity as a means for exerting pressure

Shop stewards and UJF members who utilise the services of freelancers are crucial co-operative parties for maintaining the supervision of the interests of freelancers and influencing freelance budgets. This co-operation is further strengthened through training, information and the exchange of experiences.

Copyright issues of freelancers are of utmost importance. UJF will not accept the demand for surrendering all rights. Sufficient compensation should be given for any sale of copyrights that exceeds that of the right to a single publication.

Technical development and consolidation trends within the field of media facilitate the use of the same freelance contribution in a variety of media. This, along with the multicompetent freelance work for radio and television should be reflected in the fee. Various tasks shall be itemised in the payment.

The same criteria for raising the basic fees of freelancers must be considered as are for journalists in employment relationships. These criteria include professional skill, experience, the level of difficulty involved in the task, the quality of the work, evening and weekend work, on-call work and the flexibility demanded for urgent work.

Since the majority of freelancers working for radio and television are in a position corresponding to that of an employee, the employer must see to it that the freelancers have access to any facilities and equipment necessary for their work. The employer must also provide training in the use of the equipment and software utilised on the job.

The fees and terms of employment for electronic freelance work not falling within the scope of collective agreements must be included in the collective agreements.

As the proportion of multimedia work is increasing, we are responding through the supervision of interests and training. An increasing number of freelancers work for the press and electronic media and can be simultaneously viewed as both



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entrepreneurs and employees. This situation is problematic, and may force a freelancer to establish a business enterprise in order to have the freedom to work for multiple employers.

A more secure life

Freelancers working as self-employed or independent professionals do not have the same level of social security as their colleagues in employment relationships. Since the end of the recession in the 1990s, entrepreneurship has been emphasised in social policy as a promoter of employment and economic growth. However, nothing significant has been accomplished to concretely improve the position of the self-employed workers. On the contrary, the YEL premium (YEL = Self-Employed Persons' Pensions Act), for instance, has risen for many to the point of being excessive. Reforms in social policy are necessary to secure the equality of citizens regardless of their mode of employment.

UJF operates on the principle that all of the Union members have the right to the same level of social security. UJF is also co-operating with different trade organisations, cultural organisations, unions and entrepreneurial organisations in efforts to affect legislation. Our goals are primarily as follows:

- equal qualifying periods for sickness benefits and other benefits
- equal rights to occupational health and rehabilitation services
- equal rights for underemployed freelancers to earnings-linked unemployment security

UJF provides its freelance members with counselling, guidance and training in issues regarding social security. UJF pays particular attention to ensuring that the freelancers dimension their YEL premium correctly and that it is included in the fees.

Quality journalism

The freelancers that have organised as a chapter within the UJF are professionals in

contrast to contributors who do journalistic work for the media either occasionally or as a hobby. The freelancers' concern over journalistic quality is the same as that shared by the entire trade.

It is important, in terms of the changing circumstances experienced by freelancers, to ensure the maintenance and development of their own professional skills and motivation to work. Furthermore, freelancers need entrepreneurial skills, or corresponding services, to be able to operate in a market-driven environment.

UJF takes into consideration the special needs of freelancers in its training and service operations, for instance, by arranging training in issues related to entrepreneurship. UJF also aims at influencing the educational institutions of the field in order to provide students with a realistic picture of freelance journalism. In developing the entrepreneurial skills of freelancers, UJF co-operates with entrepreneurs' organisations and other specialists.

Mutual networks and different forms of entrepreneurship, such as cooperatives, are useful in helping freelancers to succeed in their profession. The use of professional sales and marketing services should also be made to be as natural as the use of accounting services.

A common issue

The supervision of the interests of freelancers must be as critical an activity within UJF as its collective agreement activities. This is not simply the task of the freelancers or their organisations, but that of the entire Union, on all levels.

The interests of freelancers will need to be supervised on this integration principle in the future as well. UJF emphasises that the weaker the fees and terms of freelance work, the more difficult it is to pursue improvements to the terms of employment and wages of those in employment relationships.



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Journalists in employment relationships and freelancers have many practical means of exerting pressure to remove some of the worst grievances. Shop stewards must find ways, within their own workplace, to monitor the income level and work conditions of their freelancers. Departments can maintain contact with regular freelancers and help to sort out some of these grievances. In the organisational and supervision of interest training provided by UJF, the freelance issues are continuously kept in the forefront.

The equal representation of freelancers in the committees and decision-making bodies of the Union, as well as in the governing bodies and other organs of related associations shall be guaranteed.

Co-operation within the freelancers' own affiliations will be increased and, in terms of supervision of interests, the necessity of a separate national union shall be investigated. Like other members, freelancers should, as a general rule, belong to a chapter that corresponds with their work.

UJF actively promotes co-operation and supervision of interests for freelancers within the internationalising field of media. Experiences from both Nordic and European co-operation serve as the foundation for international co-operation.

In order to secure and develop the membership services for freelancers working abroad, the Union co-operates with the journalist associations of the countries in question.