

## The Danish Union of Journalists





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## The Danish Union of Journalists

The Danish Union of Journalists was founded in 1961. It is an independent member organisation – a trade union for every one who supplies content to the media or works in communication in either the public or the private sector. We are independent of party-political interests and our activities are financed entirely by membership fees.

In the beginning of 2010, we have 14,500 members and employ about 60 staff in the trade union and the unemployment fund that assists members with all the problems they may experience in their working lives.

We fulfil our mission by:

- striving to be an indispensable professional organisation for anyone working in communication or producing content for the media;
- optimising the quality of jobs and professions for everyone employed in the media and communication sectors;
- contributing actively to national and international debates about freedom of the press, freedom of expression and freedom of information

Our work to protect the interests of members is therefore twofold. On the one hand we are a traditional strong trade union and on the other we are an influential interest or pressure group within media politics fighting for optimum conditions for the Danish media and journalism in general.

## An all-embracing organisation

In most places around the world, trade unions for journalists only include journalists producing content for traditional independent media. The Danish Union of Journalists is

different. We have chosen to include everyone who produces content for the media as well as individuals who make a living from professional work within communication. As a result, our group of members is less homogenous than in other countries. However, in our opinion, having journalists, press photographers, graphic artists, illustrators, communication staff and advertising photographers in the same union presents many advantages. In fact, these groups influence each other's work and often work together at their places of employment.

For the same reason, The Danish Union of Journalists does not distinguish between members employed in the public and private sectors, between permanent employees and freelancers, or between students, the unemployed or retirees. What matters is whether the member is involved in the media and communication industry. We believe that together we are stronger.

### **Strong collective agreements**

The Danish Union of Journalists firmly believes that strong collective agreements are the best way to protect our members' interests in the labour market. We build on centuries of traditions in the Danish labour market according to which employees and employers agree on terms of employment. The so-called "Danish Model" is very helpful in that regard, as it allows the two sides of the industry to enter into collective agreements without government interference.

Over the years, the Danish Union of Journalists has successfully negotiated approximately 75 collective agreements in our relatively small labour market. They range from large agreements covering most of the Danish daily newspaper industry's 3,000 to 4,000 members to agreements for small

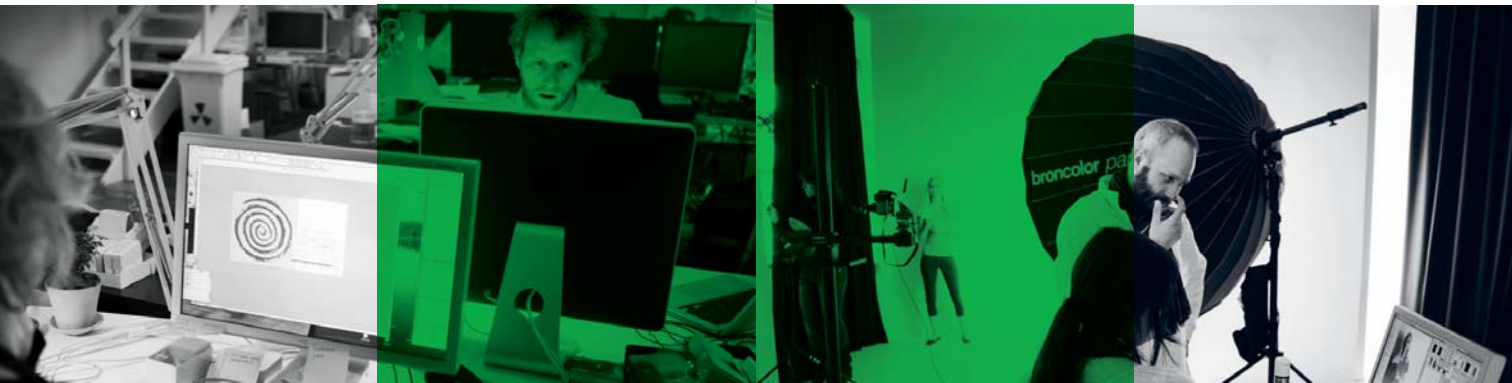
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companies covering only five or six members. The vision remains the same: As far as possible, our members should be covered by agreements that allow us as a trade union to safeguard their interests in case of a conflict with the employers.

The trade union representative scheme plays a key role in the collective agreements of the Danish Union of Journalists. So too does the commitment of the individual who represents the employees in the workplace. The union representative is the association's entry points to the work place, and the Danish Union of Journalists places great emphasis on its relationship with the representatives and their training.

### **Freelancers rights in the labour market**

Employers in the Danish media market make extensive use of freelance staff not permanently employed at the individual workplace. The group of freelancers and self-employed professionals within journalism, photography, graphic work and communication is growing, and the Danish Union of Journalists therefore places great emphasis on ensuring that freelancers in the labour market have the same rights as their permanently employed colleagues.



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This often leads to stubborn fights with employers and authorities who are of the opinion that freelancers should not enjoy the same rights as permanent employees with regard to parental leave, continuing education and contractual protection.

A case from 2007 is a good example of the Danish Union of Journalists' fight to protect the rights of freelancers. In this case, the Danish Aller Press newspaper group dictated new terms regarding fees for resale to other media within the Aller Group that both the Danish Union of Journalists and the freelancers involved found unreasonable. The Danish Union of Journalists called a strike against Aller Press on behalf of the freelancers. The Aller Press group eventually accepted the union's demands, after the Danish Union of Journalists won a case in the Danish Industrial Court on a matter of principle, when the Court decided that a union is entitled to call a strike on behalf of staff not permanently employed. The case attracted widespread international attention, as in many ways it settled a question of principle with regards to freelancers and their author rights and copyright.

### Press rules and press cards

The official Danish press card is visible proof of membership of the Danish Union of Journalists. All members of the Danish Union of Journalists are therefore entitled to a press card, which in Denmark is highly respected by organisations and authorities. In Denmark, a press card issued by the Danish Union of Journalists grants entry beyond police cordons so the press can report from the centre of events. The Danish Union of Journalists is therefore in continuous dialogue with the Danish police to uphold respect for the press card among authorities and card holders. As from 2010 the press card from the Danish Union of Journalists also works as an international press card holding the logo of the International Federation of Journalists.



Self-regulation is a key word for Danish media workers. Press ethics is part of the curriculum in all journalism degree programmes and the debate about ethics in journalism is often high on the agenda among Danish journalists. Ethically responsible journalism is based on the Danish "Advisory rules of sound press ethics", a further development of rules adopted by editors in 1960. Two new clauses were added to the rules in connection with the introduction of the Media Responsibility Act in 1991. The first clause states that to request a journalist to carry out work in violation of the rules of sound press ethics constitutes a breach of those rules.

The clause states that a journalist cannot be requested to undertake assignments that conflict with the individual's conscience or conviction. The second clause states that it is also a breach of press ethics to prevent justified publication of information of material importance to the general public and to allow a third party to influence mass media content if this raises doubts about the freedom and independence of the mass media. Following the adoption of these clauses and the provision for equal representation of editors and journalists on press councils, the Danish Union of Journalists could also approve the rules on behalf of its members.

It happens occasionally, in Denmark as well as in other countries, that media organisations or individual journalists are accused of contravening the rules for good press ethics. The parties in question can be called upon to appear before the Danish Press Council, which is the media's internal governing body outside the Danish courts. The Press Council, established



in its current form in 1991, rules on cases raised by eligible parties. It is composed of representatives from the media, the courts and the general public. If a media company is criticised by the Press Council, the company in question must publish the decision of the Press Council, if requested to do so. The Danish Union of Journalists nominates the industry's representative to the Press Council.

The Danish Media Responsibility Act determines who can be sued for law infringements or acts resulting in claims for damages, committed by the publication of material in a mass medium covered by the Media Responsibility Act. The general rule is that liability attaches to the person under whose name and with whose consent the material was written, photographed or expressed. The editor-in-chief is responsible for anonymous material and can be held jointly liable in accordance with specific rules. Liability only attaches to the publisher if neither the individual author nor the editor-in-chief can be held liable. The wish of the media and the majority in the Danish parliament (Folketinget) was (and is) that publishers should not be given a platform for interfering in editorial matters. Similarly, the individual journalist should assume responsibility, which would promote independent journalism.

### **International involvement and safety**

Despite Denmark being a small country, the Danish Union of Journalists is one of the main contributors to the international safety work for journalists. The union's different specialised groups, employee associations and geographical districts donate €60,000-70,000 every year to the international

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safety fund, administered by the International Federation of Journalists. This demonstrates the union's solidarity with the many media employees and their families who suffer every year as a result of the lack of press freedom in many parts of the world.

The Danish Union of Journalists is also active in other international organisations. One such organisation is International Media Support (IMS), which is based in Denmark and provides support and assistance to media companies and journalists who for one reason or another are working in conflict areas.

Another example of the international work of the Danish Union of Journalists is its involvement in the International News Safety Institute (INSI) – the international media industry organisation for the protection and safety training of staff in war zones and areas of conflict.

The international involvement of the Danish Union of Journalists largely takes place under the auspices of the International Federation of Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists. However, the Danish Union of Journalists is also active at the Nordic level as part of the Nordic Federation of Journalists, a network facilitating knowledge exchange, problem solving and coordination between journalist unions in the Nordic countries.

### **Career and competence development**

The Danish Union of Journalists is of the opinion that members should be given the best possible advice about career development and ways to improve their competencies in order to keep up with an industry in rapid development. We therefore go out of our way to offer individually tailored assistance to members who need advice about their career or a sparring partner to help plan their future working life. In that context,

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the Danish Union of Journalists organises courses in writing résumés and CV's, courses for new graduates who need to break into the job market, and courses for freelancers who want to start their own business.

It is important to us that our members have a wide range of opportunities for competence development. Development must be fun and challenging. That is why we created the Danish International Media Festival, which every second year gathers around 1,200 members for two days for a variety of sessions about new trends in the different industries in which our members are employed. The programme at the Danish International Media Festival often includes top international names from the world of journalism, so both Danish and foreign visitors have plenty of reasons to experience the Danish International Media Festival. Go to [www.fagfestival.dk](http://www.fagfestival.dk) to visit the festival website.

## International fight for copyright

The fight for the copyright of media employees is a global issue, and the work to secure the rights of individual media employees therefore transcends borders in companies with international business.

For a number of years, the Danish Union of Journalists has been actively involved in influencing the Danish Copyright Act as well as collaborated with other unions of journalists and rights organisations around the world to influence and coordinate copyright work internationally. We are convinced that the efforts we invest in international copyright work benefit our members and their own fight to protect their rights.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has an Authors' Rights Expert Group (AREG). The Danish Union of Journalists has done extensive work for AREG, including chairing the

group for about 25 years. This work also generated valuable knowledge for the work of the Danish Joint Council of Authors' and Performers' Rights. The members of this council include all unions for inventors and performing artists in Denmark.

Via its role in the AREG, the Danish Union of Journalists has represented the IFJ in the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO) where the Danish Union of Journalists for long periods has served on the board on behalf of authors around the world. In recent years, the work for the IFRRO has included considerable efforts to create close and systematic collaboration between authors and performing artists around the world. This helps highlight the importance of copyright, also for individuals supplying content to the media.

Via the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the Danish Union of Journalists has actively influenced work in the European Commission and the European Parliament and contributes to this work on an ongoing basis when it is relevant for the media and the people who supply content to the media.

At an international level, copyright issues are handled by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). WIPO is an organisation under the UN that administers a world-wide convention on copyright (the Berne Convention). The roles of the Danish Union of Journalists within IFJ and IFRRO have therefore also led to many assignments for this organisation.

- Learn more about the Danish Union of Journalists at [journalistforbundet.dk/english](http://journalistforbundet.dk/english)



■ The Danish Union of Journalists is a trade union for people who are involved in journalism, media and communication. We have 14,500 members who are employed or freelance as journalists, photographers, cartoonists, TV-producers, directors of documentaries, communicators etc. We ensure that our members are met with respect for press freedom and their authors' rights, that they also otherwise have good working conditions and are able to develop their competencies. We work towards the media and communication playing a decisive part in dialogue and openness in society.



Danish Union of Journalists  
media & communication

Gammel Strand 46  
DK-1202 Copenhagen K

Phone +45 33 42 80 00  
dj@journalistforbundet.dk  
journalistforbundet.dk/english