

President Speech - Steering Committee Report

All over Europe our colleagues are facing difficult times, media are cutting down the number of staff, urging journalists to deliver more on more platform which leaves less time for research, reflecting on ethical standards, investigative journalism. Too often the motto is to publish first, then edit.

Salaries and fees are in decline and authors' right under threats. For many journalists and freelancers in particular it is getting more difficult to make a living out of the job.

Besides the economical pressure on journalists, we face an increasing conflict between media and politics: legislation brings press freedom in decline and worst: We see political leaders creates a hostile environment for journalists and media. Just as an example: The Czech president Zeman joked with president Putin about the number of journalists saying: "We should liquidate some of them"!

I find such a so-called joke disgusting. As I emphasized in my opening speech, journalists are doing a dangerous job where investigative journalists in particular risk their lives. Two journalists have been killed in the EU because of being investigative.

Solidarity among journalists in Europe is needed more than ever. In the EFJ we are constantly asked for assistance and visibility, for ideas, for projects, for missions, for meetings with authorities.

We have been more active in meeting our affiliates. Missions to Serbia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania, France and Macedonia. Also during other initiatives, the general secretary, staff members, myself and several board members have attended meeting, conferences etc. Behalf of all of us, I can tell you that it has always been very important o meet you.

February this year we initiated the "Free European Media" -conference in the Solidarity Center Gdansk in Poland. This conference was made in cooperation with a large number of partners and will very soon be followed up by a book about state pressure on media. We also have a list of recommendations to follow up on.

Turkey remains as the largest challenge for press freedom in Europe. The country houses the biggest jail for journalists – 150 journalists behind bars in a country where press freedom is jailed. Last Summer I attended the opening

hearing at the Cumhuriyat Trial, which has ended up sending some of the journalists to jail and one of them for a life – just for doing their job.

I have to emphasize for our Turkey's colleagues: We are all with you and we will never surrender. The cases in Turkey are so numerous that it is one of the examples of where we need to work very close together in partnership with our colleagues in ECPMF, IPI, RSF, PEN, Index of Censorship, Open Democracy.

During years, the EFJ has paid high attention to the situation in Turkey not least through a number of projects.

In our core mandate the EFJ should influence in European legislation. Since 2015 we have used enormous resources on the EU copyright directive and the broadcast regulation both having a significant impact on authors' rights and our members possibility to be remunerated for further of their material.

We welcome the articles about contracts and transparency even though we still want improvements as journalists would still face demands of signing away their rights. – Neighboring rights is one of the more delicate articles. We have advocated for ensuring journalists fair share of the remuneration for these rights and we still doing it. To ensure licensing and avoid new exception in the educational sector has equally been on top of the agenda.

We must - and only by working together all parties – we must find a way, where FAANG (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google) will pay for copyrights and authors' rights! – This is a topic we are going to deal with in the coming years.

Regarding trade secrets, we have delivered to our affiliates promised tools for negotiations on national level as the directive is being implemented now. In Denmark the EFJ-recommendations actually changed the proposed law not only in favour of journalists and media, but also whistleblowers.

Regarding whistleblowers we have been working close together with Eurocadres in advocacy EU for a wider protection.

One of the latest topics which also will remain on top of the agenda for decades and in fact has been there always is “Propaganda, lies and disinformation” – now also so-called fake factories. Our general secretary was member of the EU high level group dealing with this, and in close cooperation with News Media Europe, the publishers association and EBU, a very

dangerous regulatory approach at EU-level was avoided.

Recently we have got a new challenge as the RSF, Reporter Sans Frontiers firmly has tried to introduce labeling of good journalism and also tried to get EFJ onboard. I have to be very precise saying that although the intention is to support journalism we cannot take part in such a labelling – of several reasons:

First of all: Who should not judge what can be considered as professional journalism.

Secondly: Authoritarian regimes would love having such a tool as it would give them legitimacy to build up new control systems of media.

Thirdly: Labelling will be against free speech. Our approach is self-regulation as anything else will lead to censorship.

Regarding the labour market, the EU has focused on the social pillar where our approach has been to improve social protection for freelances and to wrap decision-making on the conditions for freelancers out of the hands of the competition authorities. Here we should welcome that our Irish colleagues have managed to get a new legislation giving right for collective bargaining for freelancers.

Our engagement has also convinced the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to focus more on freelances and atypical workers as such.

Earlier this year in Gdansk we started a new training programme mainly for leaders of and in our affiliates. It was initiated together with the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) and during the two days in Gdansk we made a strategy very much aligned with our vision, namely capacity building of journalist organisations in Europe including a strong focus on gender and recruitment of young journalists and the media workers at the online platforms. This will result in more training.

The environment in Europe for strengthening organisations should be good as the European Union is urging us to do so. 2015-2016 we carried through the EU-financed project Rights and Jobs focusing on both organizing and labour rights. This project is now followed-up by “Managing Change in Media” with a successful start in Nürnberg on business models earlier this year and yesterday here in Lissabon, where I should mention some of the key

elements discussed to strengthen our unions:

How to stay relevant and ensure that i.e. the youth, female journalists, freelancers all see themselves represented.

Reach out to potential members

That there is a need to do more on gender

Stop politicizing where that exist

To get tools for strategy and methodology

We have a lot of tasks in front of us. As more we organize as stronger can we stay. We need it to meet all the challenges regarding both press freedom and labour rights - to stay relevant for our members and make a difference.

Mogens Blicher Bjerregards