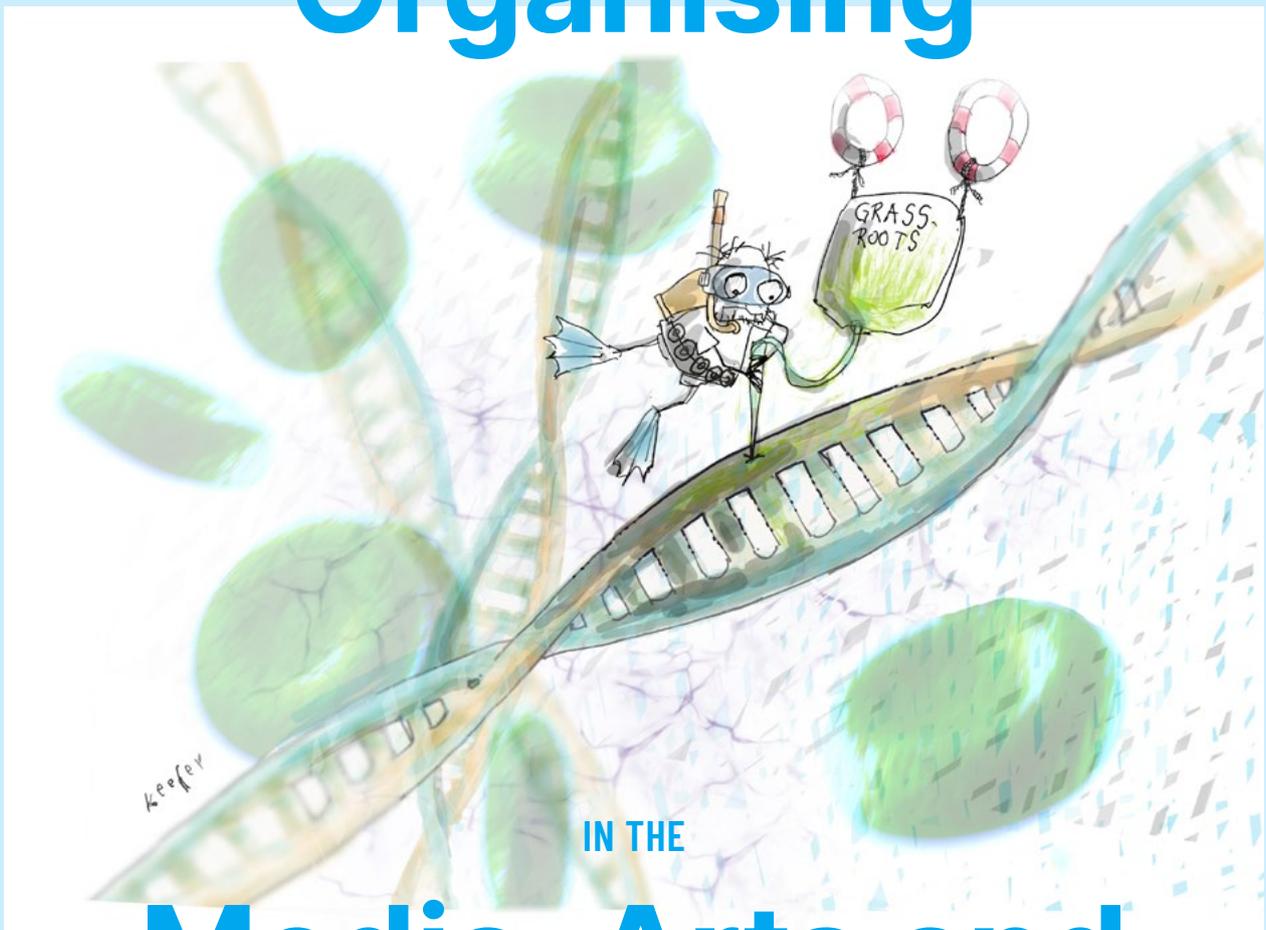


HANDBOOK ON

Trade Union Organising



IN THE

Media, Arts and Entertainment Sector

This handbook is the outcome of a joint project by the four European trade union federations in the Media, Arts and Entertainment sector, namely: the International Federation of Actors (FIA); the International Federation of Musicians (FIM), UNI MEI Global Union in Media, Entertainment and Arts and the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). The project, entitled “Reaching the Full Potential of Social Dialogue for Atypical Workers” focused on the challenge of union representation of workers in the Media, Arts and Entertainment sector, who are freelance, self-employed or otherwise atypical workers. The project was funded via the European Commission’s DG Employment and Social Affairs budget line for Information and Training Measures for Workers’ Organisations. It ran throughout 2018 and 2019, with a concluding event held in Dublin in February 2020. The two main strands of the project were on organising and recruiting atypical workers to the trade unions in the sector and on addressing the legal obstacles that may arise when seeking to collectively bargain on their behalf. This handbook draws directly on the experience that was gained in the framework of the first project strand: it offers an indepth focus on the challenge of organising atypical workers in the sector, drawing on the experience of the different participating trade unions.

The project involved nine trade unions, who volunteered to participate in the project; as well as three project trainers, who each engaged with three unions by visiting them in their national context and offering training, experience and feedback. The participating unions were:

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- FINNISH MUSICIANS UNION, FINLAND
 - IRISH EQUITY GROUP AND THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR, SIPTU, IRELAND
 - KUNSTENBOND, THE NETHERLANDS
 - NVJ, THE NETHERLANDS
 - SERBIAN MUSICIANS UNION, SERBIA
 - SNJ-CGT, FRANCE
 - TEATERFÖRBUNDET, SWEDEN
 - ZZAP, POLAND
 - ZDUS, SLOVENIA

→ **Introducing the Trainers:**

The project engaged three freelance trainers to carry out the national training sessions for the nine participating unions. Each brought different experiences and approaches to the project.

**KATE ELLIOTT**

Kate has had two distinctive careers within the creative industries. For twenty years she was a freelance costumier working in theatres throughout the UK and internationally. She believes passionately in improving working lives and changing them for the better, and was active for many years as a lay union organiser in BECTU, the UK media and entertainment union. From 2002 - 2018 Kate was a full time union officer in BECTU, responsible for training and skills; this included overseeing the expansion and delivery of a range of training initiatives for the creative industries, union representative courses and an ambitious skills programme aimed at helping freelancers into employment and supporting them at work and beyond. She also held the remit for promoting and expanding gender equality within the wider union. In May 2018 Kate left full time employment with BECTU and went back to the freelance world assisting unions and other organisations to grow through training, organising and development opportunities. In 2019 she qualified as a Mental Health First Aid England trainer teaching freelance creatives to look after their mental health at work.

**TARA O'DOWD**

Tara has thirteen years experience as a union campaign leader and organizing trainer with SEIU in America and FNV in the Netherlands. At FNV, Tara played a central role in the union's Deliveroo campaign. Her focus areas are increasing sign-up, harnessing social media activism, and developing member leadership. She is also a children's book writer.

**BECKY WRIGHT**

Becky is the Executive Director of Unions 21, a UK forum for unions to explore challenges and work on collaborative projects. Previous to this, she spent five years as the Director of the UK confederation (TUC)'s Organising Academy and was responsible for the development and delivering of the Academy's training programme for union organisers and officers. Following activity in local community and women's campaigns, in 2001, she joined rail union the TSSA as a trainee organiser through the Academy then went on to take national and regional organising projects for a variety of public and private unions.

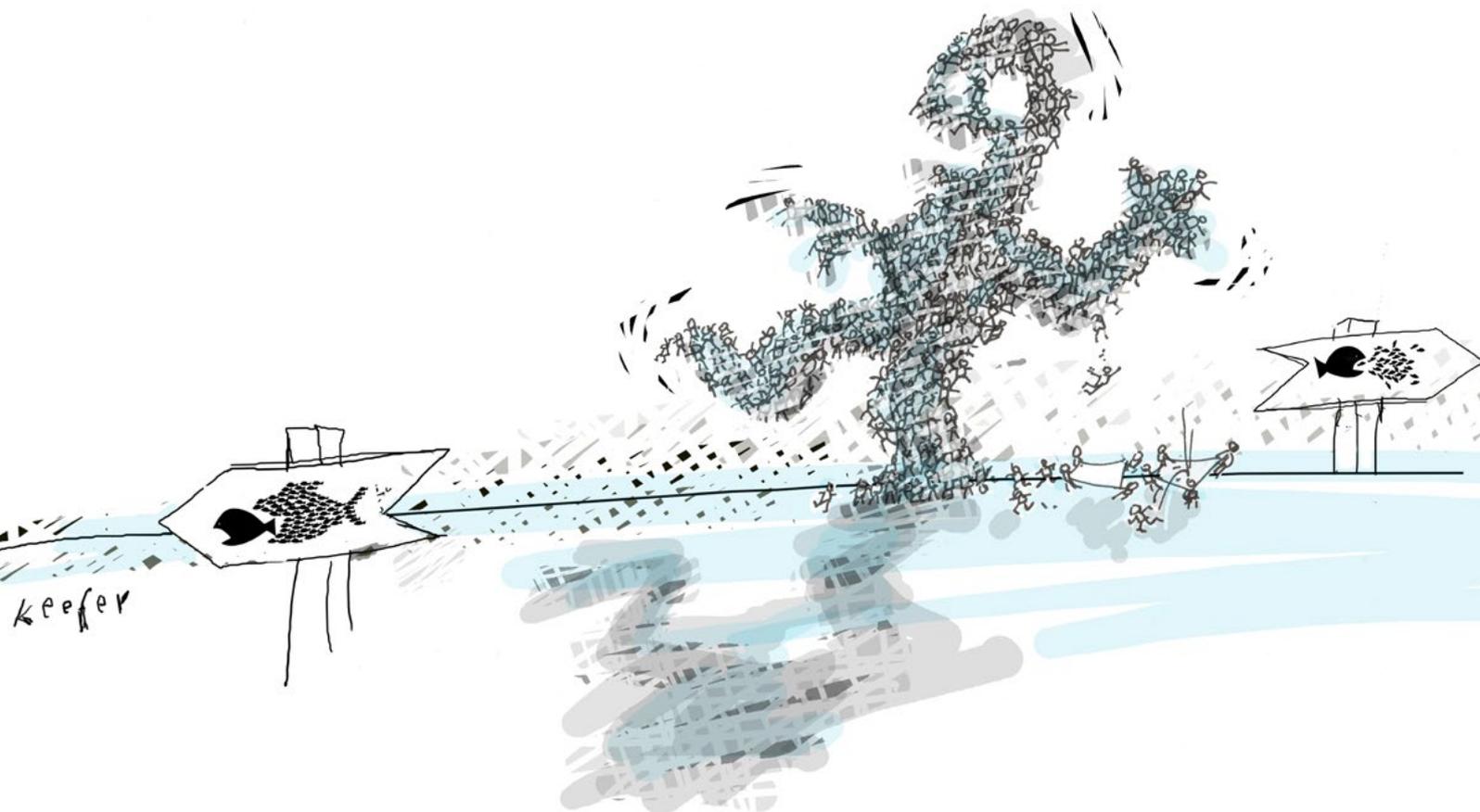
This reader draws together the key findings from the project actions. It reports on the process and the challenges encountered in undertaking this training and organising action. It highlights how trainers approached the organising challenge in different national unions and contexts, adapting their approach. It gives a deeper insight into some of the techniques used and closes by giving an overview of some of the new organising and recruitment initiatives that resulted from it. It offers inspiration and ideas to the many unions in the sector which are facing the shared challenge of adapting to the challenges of a changing workforce and industrial landscape. In particular, it looks at the pressing need to reach out and be able to represent the freelance, self-employed or otherwise atypical workers in the sector.

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SECTION 1

Preparing the ground for Trade Union organising and recruitment



Trade Unions in the Media, Arts and Entertainment sector, and indeed more generally, face an ongoing challenge in terms of maximising their limited resources, both financial and human. Simply offering a reliable point of contact; developing some useful resources and services for members; and being reliably present as a representative in important industrial relations and political fora, already stretches many unions to the limit of what can be managed and sustained. Yet in spite of these constraints, most unions have the will and ambition to grow and to find ways to reach out to new members. They recognise the importance of organising to ensure a sustainable and stronger union in the future, in an increasingly challenging work environment. However, there is the key basic challenge of creating a space for structured reflection on union growth, development and organising in a context of competing priorities and busy schedules. The organising work within this project sought to take account of that reality and to plan the work accordingly. The aim was for each of the participating unions to successfully carve out a space to engage with a trainer and put in place a strategy in relation to organising, with a focus on freelance, self-employed and otherwise atypical workers in the sector.

A number of elements developed within the project were important in achieving this aim and developing a real focus on, and engagement with, organising and union recruitment, despite an already busy agenda of work. In practical terms, the process consisted of the identification of willing unions; the completion of a preparatory questionnaire by each of the participating unions; and finally two national level visits by one of the project trainers.

The key takeaways from this process were:

→ **Having a preparatory questionnaire and outside support is helpful**

The approach developed in the project was based on bringing in an external organising expert to engage with the participating unions. The project experience points to the fact that having an external person coming for scheduled visits creates a focus and timeline that can make building in time and space for discussions and planning of organising easier. The questionnaire developed by the steering group and trainers was also helpful in this regard as it created a focal point for the preparatory work at national level and was a starting point in terms establishing a shared understanding of the sectoral landscape and of setting ambitions and expectations. It was also

a good first step in creating interest and 'buy-in' as in several participating unions, the board of management worked collectively on its completion.

- **The questionnaire nonetheless has limitations in terms of providing meaningful insight into national situations and cannot be a substitute for on-the-ground engagement and national visits**

That being said, it was also clear that the questionnaire in itself is not a sufficient basis for planning an organising strategy and vision. While the trainers were able to gain useful insights and glean a basic understanding of the national and union situation from the completed questionnaire, the visits to the unions in their home country were a key part of the process. Without them, the insight from the questionnaire would have been incomplete and superficial.

- **An outside person can be a source of international examples, ideas and expertise and a valuable sounding board**

The project also demonstrated how bringing in an external expert can galvanise interest and create a new space for reflection. National level unions were able to gain a fresh perspective on their situation, which can help to overcome a feeling of helplessness in the face of some of the more intransigent obstacles they face. The three trainers in this project had also been selected on the basis of their experience and track record in organising and they were thus able to bring in examples and approaches drawn from their own experience, as well as introduce the unions to both tried and trusted techniques, as well as innovative approaches, in relation to organising. They were also able to tailor this offer to the specific situation of the union in question.

- **They may also face limitations due to language difference and a less nuanced understanding of the national situation, which requires time for in-depth exchange**

There were also some challenges associated with working with an external expert in the national context, which must also be taken into consideration in developing this approach. Firstly, it will almost inevitably require working through a second language. The project trainers were English-speakers and the receiving unions needed to adapt to that. There was some recourse to interpretation, but the preferred approach was to work as well as possible through English, in an informal atmosphere. This requires both sides to speak slowly and try to always make themselves understood. Secondly there is a real need for flexibility on the part of trainers, as the prepared strategies and examples often need to be adapted to the circumstances and expectations of the national unions and the dynamics of the group on the day. Furthermore, the trainers' understanding of the national situation is likely to evolve significantly in the course of the visit. They will also gain insight into the personalities and expectations on the ground. They have to be ready to adapt their approach accordingly.

- **There are structural limitations that arise from the fact that the unions may lean on and need to fully engage freelance activists, who are not always easy to gather for meetings**

Despite the positive effect of bringing in an external person for scheduled visits in terms of creating a new space for reflection and discussion, there is nevertheless a challenge in bringing together the freelance activists who may be vital to unions' activities. Given that their schedules may be unpredictable up to the last minute, this is something that cannot really be addressed. It may well prove impossible, for example, to gather the same group together for the first and second training visits. It will be up to the union to try and gather key people for one or other of the meetings, within the limitations of what is possible. Equally, the union will need to relay actions decided to the relevant wider group. This is a structural reality in the Media, Arts and Entertainment sector, where freelance and often very short-term work is increasingly the norm.

- **Buy-in from union leadership at national level is key for success**

Finally, the experience from the project demonstrated once again the importance of real commitment at the highest level in the union to actually making a success of any strategies developed. Without a willingness to follow up on the discussions and planning sessions, there will be little impact on union membership. This follow-through is best ensured by having the decision-makers in the union involved from the outset.

SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE PROJECT TRAINERS REGARDING THE PREPARATORY PHASE OF THE ORGANISING PROJECT

“Any initial point of research would usually involve scouring the union’s website for insight and information, however this was prohibitive within this project due to the language barrier and the fact that some of the unions had very small websites due to the size of their organisation. Therefore, the questionnaire was a valuable starting point to help to visualise the union, its structures and how it operates and supports its members. The next step was to have an in depth conversation with union staff responsible for organising, if such staff existed, to better understand their needs and those of the union. This was fairly straightforward in Teaterförbundet in Sweden as their experience and operation was most closely aligned with the traditional union experience in the UK; there was much common ground with similar themes and issues. The Musicians Union in Serbia and ZDUS in Slovenia were less straightforward as they were very small and run almost entirely by volunteers, so it was more difficult to understand their structure and to plan for an initial visit.

In initial discussions with the trainer Teaterförbundet in Sweden suggested three separate presentations to the union executive board, the full union staff and a selection of advocates (activists/ reps) to showcase the aims of the project and the opportunities available for the union to grow its organising and recruitment agenda. This was also the basis for trips to Serbia and Slovenia, with modifications and the need to adapt swiftly to the actual experience in each host country. Some of the completed sections in the initial questionnaire were difficult to follow and weren’t received until very close to the training date, which left little time to plan meaningful training based around their needs, so on the spot adaptation was necessary. The slowness of response can be explained by the fact that both unions are run by volunteers who have many other commitments and less time available; they should be commended for their commitment to any involvement in the project. This is discussed in more detail in a later section of the handbook.

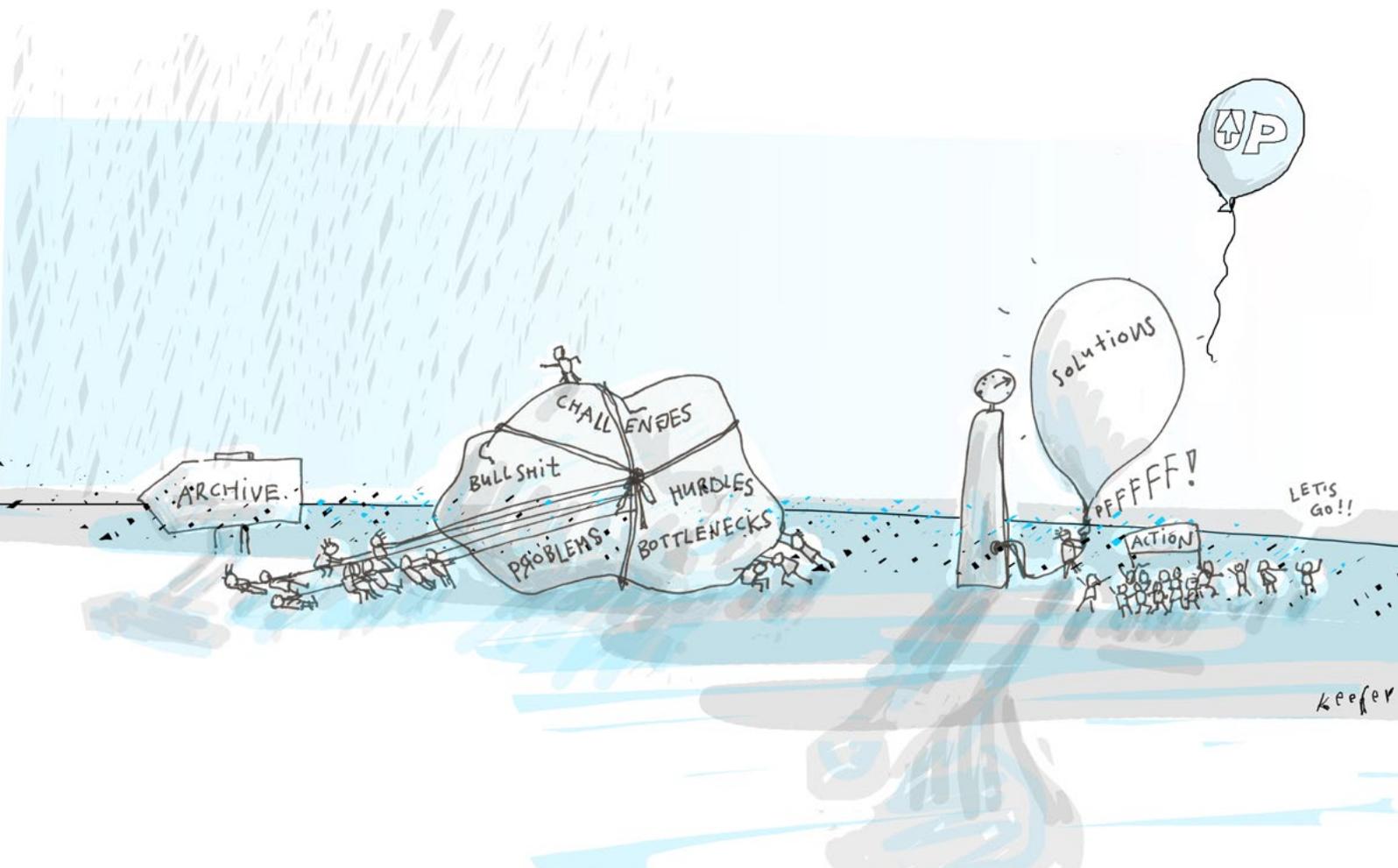
Kate Elliott, Freelance Union Trainer

“The questionnaire was a good starting point for unions and the trainers to map out what work could be done. In this regard, the more prepared a union was and information it had, the easier it was to consider a way forward and it could help to match the trainer up with a union. For example, one of my unions had a very clear idea of the project they were working on, how they wanted me to assist them and how my time would be allocated.”

Becky Wright, Unions 21

SECTION 2

Entering the internal debate in an individual union and context



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One of the key challenges that the project trainers needed to address was the need to engage meaningfully with each of the unions in their precise context and set of circumstances. As mentioned above, this required an open-minded and flexible approach. Different participating unions were at different stages in their internal discussion in relation to organising. The trainers sought to engage with each of the unions at the stage at which they were, and to add value to their endeavours in that context. This section seeks to draw together the approaches and techniques used and loosely groups some of the experiences of national unions. Naturally there was also evolution in the course of the project, but this section aims to offer a simplified overview.

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- Unions that are, perhaps for the first time, seeking to really establish a common vision of what organising, reaching out to freelancers and union development would look like for them and what its value would be for the future of the union.

The project identified some of the participating unions as still being at an early stage in developing a real engagement with the idea of organising and reaching a firm agreement on the priority of pursuing it. In this case, there is still a need for the unions to “have the argument” regarding the value of organising and agree internally on why and how they should go forward. That reflection process in itself is valuable and a vital baseline for any future action. Some of the experience in the project illustrates this.



Planning for organising within the **SERBIAN MUSICIAN'S UNION (SINDIKAT MUZICKIH UMETNIKA)** was complex due to a number of factors, not least a change of personnel within the union since the initial conference in October 2018 in Rotterdam. Logistically it was hard to plan for the trip as the union was very small (around 300 members) and everyone worked on a voluntary basis, so communication was difficult and at times slow. A room to work in was organised in an arts centre on a student campus on the

outskirts of Belgrade, and eight members of the union worked with the trainer across two days, though not the same set of delegates. The delegates were from opera choirs and national orchestras, both in Belgrade and other Serbian cities. The questionnaire had been received only a few days before the training commenced and wasn't very comprehensive, so generic training was planned without being exactly sure of the needs of the union. Much of the time was a fact finding

mission and by the end of the first day the need to go right back to basics was identified; discussing how a union should function and suggesting ways of operating at a more professional level. There was talk of follow up training later in the year, but without clear leadership and a strategic plan for the union this would be difficult to achieve as much groundwork still needed to be carried out. There would be a possibility to help with this, but it would be dependent on what the union wants to achieve and this was not clear. There were some great people involved, who all work hard in a voluntary capacity to support the membership, but in order to grow they would need to rethink their strategy as they don't encourage freelance/atypical workers into membership due to the economic situation, and there are a limited number of full time employees working in this field, making it more challenging, though not impossible, for the union to grow beyond its current capacity.

In **SLOVENIA ZDUS, THE SLOVENIAN ACTOR'S AND PLAYWRIGHT'S ASSOCIATION AND THE CULTURE TRADE UNION, GLOSA**, agreed that initially one day's training would be a good starting point and a room was booked in SLOGI, the Slovenian Theatre Institute in central Ljubljana. Six members from ZDUS and two members from GLOSA, including the GLOSA President, came together to think about organising themselves and to look at the differences between an association and a trade union and how they can work together. There was a history, whereby



ZDUS was previously affiliated to GLOSA, but eventually took the decision to disengage from the partnership with GLOSA, due to differing expectations on both sides. In the training session there was a debate around the differences and benefits of trade unions versus associations and the power of a trade union in law versus the weakness of an association. The training covered the history of the organising model in unions and where the idea of organising came from; the basic theory of organising and how to plan a campaign. A practical activity was used around being confident to ask someone to join the union and the trainer shared knowledge of the differences between organising and servicing atypical/freelance members. It was agreed that this discussion should be further pursued, as there was a willingness to work together and be more open to the benefits of unions to support workers. In November 2019 a second visit took place and the group refreshed what had been covered in July, before looking as a group at motivating volunteers and encouraging solidarity within ZDUS. The trainer was keen for the group to have concrete plans for the future and asked them to think about a specific campaign. Since summer they had already been proactive in creating a survey of freelance actors and playwrights around health and well-being with the aim of opening a clinic for performers. They were given the opportunity to work in a group in their own language, thereby facilitating ease of discussion and the flow of ideas whilst reporting back in English. Large post-it notes were used and the group was asked to start with any general ideas by putting each suggestion on a post-it. There were a number of suggestions to encourage current members to get more involved as well as attracting new members to ZDUS through a range of initiatives, such as more regular networking events

and professional development opportunities. The group was then coaxed to rate these ideas in priority and achievability, by moving the post-it notes around so they ended up with a workable plan. One of their priorities was to change their name as there is already a Slovenian pensioner's association sharing the same acronym ZDUS. They ended the day feeling confident they had something concrete they can take forward throughout 2020.



Regarding **SNJ-CGT, FRANCE**: coming into the project, there seemed to be two main challenges to unions taking an organising approach. The first was how freelancers are treated by within the framework of the law in France. The law should give unions an incentive to be active with freelancers in the exact same way that they are with employed staff (bargaining power) in a way that other freelance unions cannot. There should be a direct line between the issues of freelancers and seeing the union as the mechanism to address these problems. The second is the difficulty in organising these workers in the fragmented system of membership and structure. This inherently places an

emphasis on workplace representation and a bureaucratic process. So, how does a union easily shift to a way of working which places an emphasis on workspace or community? This explains the rise of non union professional organisations such as Profession Pigist and Ras La Plume who try to make freelancers aware of their rights and engage in professional issues. In some regards, it could be said that the unions' inability to represent the needs of this workforce forced them to consider new types of organisations.

This training was part of a tentative move by the SNJ-CGT towards building a bridge between all interested organisations and a step towards identifying common bargaining outcomes for freelancers. It is against this background that the first session was planned. The main focus was to get a clear understanding of what organising is, how it could apply to the French unions and also how could unions, usually in competition (alongside the professional organisation) come together. The setting of common rules for behaviour and openness, a mixture of lecture and group work ensured that the group got to know each other, began to break down barriers and look for common ways of working. The first session focused on the concept of organising, the second had a more practical approach - how to talk to colleagues, how to identify leaders and how to think about digital channels.

This coalition/coordination is in its tentative stages but has the potential to make real difference in the working lives of freelance journalists. There have been two actions since the training which has brought everyone together. The first is the remembrance of the creation of Loi Cressard and

then linking in with the strikes to protect retirement (some media coverage of this participation is available online¹).

The challenge, of course, for this coordination is how it relates to the building of activists and membership but as a way to cohesively show freelance journalists that their needs are important to unions, this is a positive first step.

- **Unions that have identified the need to reach out to new members including freelancers and who have taken a decision to develop an organising strategy, but have not yet been able to put something concrete in place**

Some of the participating unions in the project were in a state of readiness to address the issue of organising and had already identified recruitment and membership growth as key priorities. They wished to avail of the expertise available to them through the project in order to kick-start this work and develop something new. These unions varied in size and resources, but had in common a wish to define concrete actions and look at how to take them forward. The role of the trainers in these cases was to help them in their critical assessment of the possibilities for organising and offer ideas on how to approach it and sustain it.

THE POLISH ACTORS UNION ZZAP began this project with the primary goal of growing their membership. At the first training, what generated excitement in the room was not this goal, but improving actors' incomes, particularly in television, which was important for their livelihoods. Actors' freelance income seemed to have decreased by twenty to forty percent over the previous fifteen years, despite more filming and income growth in Poland.² With such a stark contrast, the choice to focus on organising actors around minimum rates was relatively clear.



THE KUNSTENBOND IN THE NETHERLANDS presented almost the opposite scenario. Freelance musicians—independent from existing unions—had built an online platform called the Platform voor Freelance Musici to encourage each other to take responsibility for their low rates of pay,³ for example by sharing information on pay rates and encouraging each other to refuse gigs below

1 <https://twitter.com/rtenfrancais/status/1203325579736551426?s=21>

2 For information on incomes in Poland see <https://tradingeconomics.com/poland/wages>.

3 For background on the rates of freelance musicians compared to employed musicians and the poverty line in the Netherlands, see <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2019/12/24/kunst-is-duur-laat-musici-niet-zelf-de-rekening-betalen-a3984864?fbclid=IwAR0saGVvKkqhYg9fV25ZYmZGJAAGB9MStysslRmbxyCCHBae-ZmMBamnJ0c>



certain minimums. This organising occurred simultaneously with legal and political changes that created a unique opportunity to address the situation of underpaid [or forced] freelancers in the Netherlands. In this context, *Kunstenbond* developed a partnership with the founders of the Platform. The trainings took place approximately nine months into this partnership, when a union contract campaign covering freelance orchestra musicians

or *replacanten* was underway. The goals of the trainings were: 1) shifting the Platform from a push for individual responsibility for rates to collective actions with impact at the bargaining table, 2) developing a second layer of member leadership devoted to 1-on-1 outreach, and 3) translating the online activists into paid members.

The **DUTCH JOURNALISTS' UNION NVJ** had already begun to explore and contextualise organising for their union and so the training came at a time when the union was ready to develop and deepen their work. The work with photojournalists occurred organically. Tariffs for news pictures had been decreasing for years and when the ANP (Dutch Photo Press Agency), one of the last decent paying organisations, decided to lower their tariffs by 50 %, the clamour for action by the union from photojournalists was great. After taking initial strike action, the union sought to move towards creating a longer term strategy, but without a clear idea of what the potential could be. Therefore, the emphasis with this union was to help build a strategy and give advice on appropriate actions and audiences.

→ **Unions that already have a developed organising and outreach strategy in general and also in relation to freelancers, but who are looking to undertake a structured review, revisit their approach and perhaps try something new**

Certain of the participating unions already had an established organising and recruitment strategy, also including the freelance workers in the sector, but who felt there was a need to try something new or target a specific sub-group. Working with these unions involved evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of previous organising efforts and defining realistic ambitions for the next phase.

In Sweden **TEATERFÖRBUNDET** had already recognised that, fundamentally, as a union, they need to recruit more members in order to survive. Sweden is changing as a society with more people in atypical work, and the union felt it was important to look to other European countries for ideas on how to organise for the future. As with ZDUS in Slovenia they plan to change their name to better reflect their members across all the sectors they represent, and this should happen at a big meeting of members in June 2020. They were already thinking about who they are now and who they want to be in the future, so the project was a very timely opportunity to discuss some ideas and plan some changes.

‘Recruitment of new members in a changing society is more important than ever. With this project we saw the opportunity to learn from others and to get the work with recruitment on a roll.’

In order to reach all the different aspects of the union (staff, board and advocates) two separate presentations were developed, one for the board and staff and a second presentation/training session with activities to help the activists think about how they could organise for growth and support their branches across the union. This was focused on examples from other unions around their development

of organising and how that offer is adapted for freelance members with differing needs, with examples of both organising campaigns and services for freelancers. The trainer also explained to the board and staff how their advocates (activists) would be trained to organise within the union and attract new members.

This initial trip took place in Stockholm over two days alongside detailed discussion with organising staff about the needs of the union, both currently and in the future, and a meeting with their communications officer sharing ideas for communications across the union. The trainer’s visit provoked lively debate as well as a plan to return to deliver a day’s organising training to the representatives from the professional sections and agree future priorities. The trip was a great opportunity for the full time organisers within the union to share ideas on how unions in other countries use organising as a tool for recruitment, retention and growth and to explain in detail to both staff and members of the union how systematic organising can benefit the union. The executive board recognised and understood the need for more members to be hands on with recruiting new members more regularly (the old mantra ‘like recruits like’ is ever true) and they made recruitment a priority for the new year.

There are many future challenges for Teaterförbundet. The situation with atypical workers and social security is precarious. Whilst the union has had these types of workers in membership for a number of years, the rest of society is rapidly following suit yet employment support services for atypical workers are diminishing. Previously the culture sector had its own section for social security but this is now gone, making working freelance more precarious and members more vulnerable.

Head of Organising for Teaterförbundet, Sara Andersson articulated ‘Recruitment of new members in a changing society is more important than ever. With this project we saw the opportunity to learn from others and to get the work with recruitment on a roll.’

FINLAND: THE FINNISH MUSICIANS’ UNION has been in a more stable situation. Experiencing a growing membership and favourable political climate and engagement with employers, the union approached the training from a perspective of analysis and reflection; what is organising, what does it mean for a union that is already growing? With this in mind, the training sought to explore the key concepts of organising, focussing on its impact on strategy and resource allocation. As a small union, with limited staff, the group explored the workings of the union and how it came together to build the overall power and influence of the union. For example, the union

has been running a successful radio station in Helsinki, and accommodation in London for members to access while working. How could these excellent projects help the union engage members, build membership and identify bargaining projects? Together, they analysed the key projects that the union was focussing on and how existing areas that were already working could be strengthened. Taking a specific project approach, the union have been keen to see the workings of other successful unions, seeking to push and develop their existing positive ways of working.

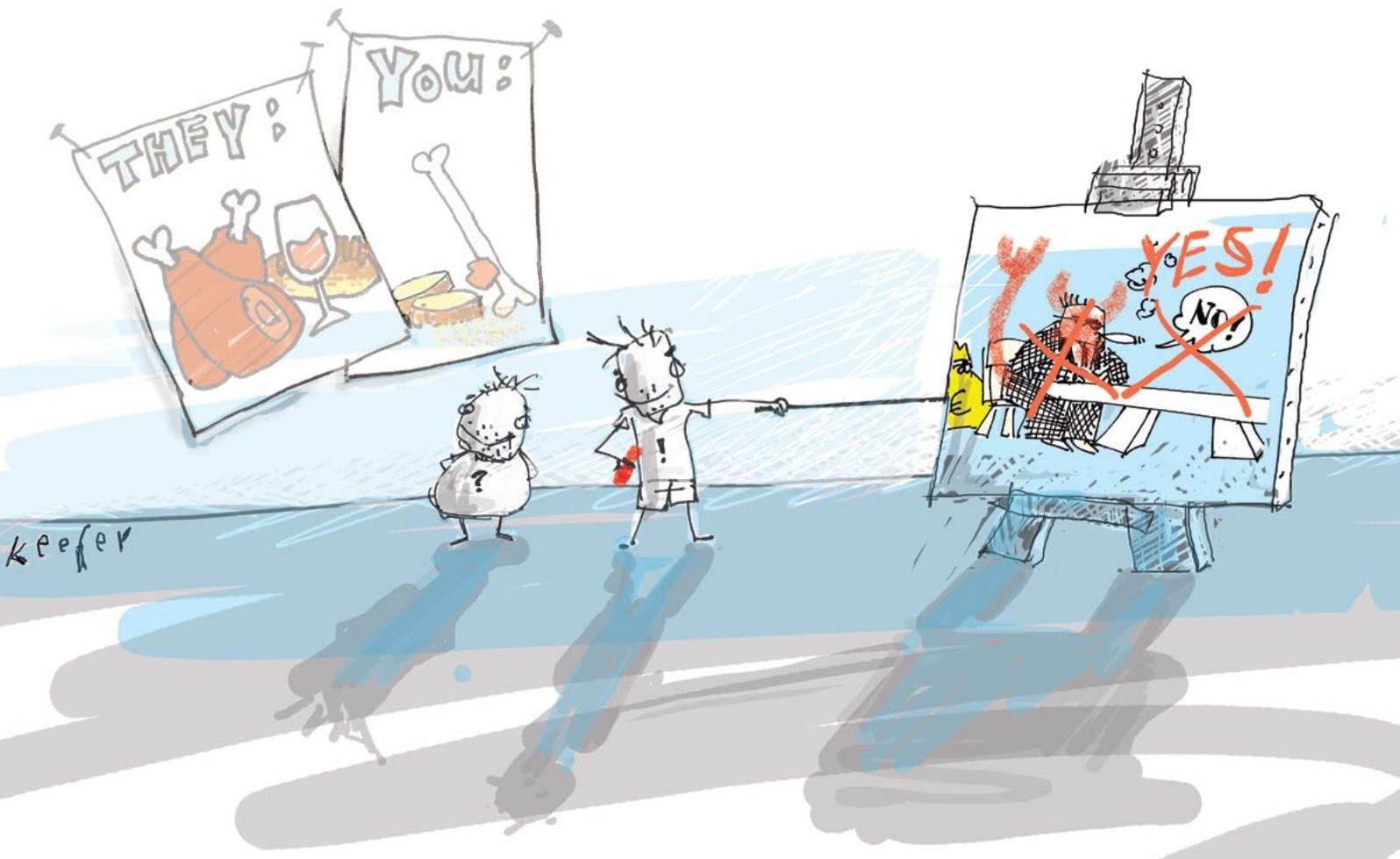


IRISH EQUITY⁴ AND THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR OF SIPTU had achieved some impressive victories securing stronger rights for actors and crew prior to the Atypical Workers Project trainings. These successes had helped Equity activate long-time members and sign up new members, who were essentially all freelancers. Staff and active members were already comfortable talking with non-members, but they were having trouble signing up “the sceptics”: people who don’t quickly or instinctively understand the power of the union. The training request was 1) to improve participants’ responses to doubts about the union and 2) to inspire trainees to build a stronger union. That could not be done by standard 1-on-1 conversation training. The group already knew and used basic organising methods, and those basics were insufficient to sign up the sceptics. Given the goals and history, a few key decisions were made: 1) Staff and members would be trained together, both to build trust and to show the members how critical their leadership was for building a stronger union; 2) all conversation training would assume quick conversations with people who had doubts about membership; 3) the focus would include creating a sense of momentum: a feeling that the union mattered and would win.

⁴ Irish Equity is also affiliated with SIPTU.

SECTION 3

The organising message



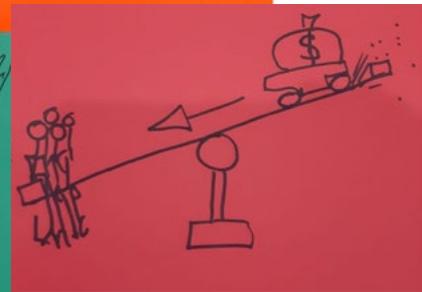
AN EXERCISE IN DEVELOPING STORYTELLING, NARRATIVE AND ANSWERING OBJECTIONS.

This section offers a focus on some of the work done in national level training specifically around developing an organising message and the challenge of anticipating and answering common objections. Developing this messaging was identified as a key part of union organising in several of the participating unions. What is the process of identifying the issues that mobilise? How to canvass member views? A number of creative approaches were developed and led by project trainer Tara O’Dowd with participating unions, helping them to focus their ideas and develop some shared conclusions to guide them in their organising work.

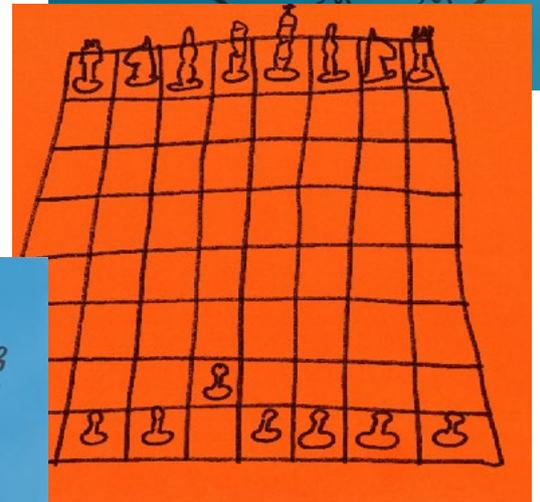
Organising training often focuses on harnessing anger, but storytelling can also be an effective tool to build a powerful movement. Especially now, when stories spread around the globe faster than ever before. But the narratives of change that inspire today are mostly not stories of powerful trade unions. People think to change the world through social media posts with millions of likes, not through the leverage of a union contract. There are many factors at play here, but certainly the most famous activists of our time are excellent storytellers. Their personal campaigns have a feeling of inevitability and emotion that draw even their opponents to respond. Storytelling is part of what creates those feelings. This idea—that narrative can be used to build a movement—was incorporated into Tara O’Dowd’s trainings with the Atypical Workers Project in three steps:

1. REFLECTION ON EXISTING STORIES OF UNION POWER.

Participants were asked to share their personal stories of what the union meant to them, in as few words as possible. Many participants came up with long complicated explanations or vague concepts. In some cases the story focused on how easy it was to resign union membership. Most participants lacked a cohesive story, despite the union having great personal meaning for them. Where there was a clear explanation of why the union mattered, the union was focused on activities that had little to do with its (inspiring) mission.



2. **ANALYSIS OF EXAMPLES OF COLLECTIVE NARRATIVES.** Good and bad examples were shown from trade unions, environmental groups, superhero films, and inspirational political figures. Participants identified not only effective messaging techniques, but also the underlying elements of an attractive narrative of change. The most crucial element being, of course, member leadership. Union staff members can tell non-members about building an active group of workers, but union members signing up their colleagues *show* that it exists.
3. **BRAINSTORMING NEW STORIES OF THE UNION'S POWER.** Participants were asked to go back to their words from the first exercise and to develop instead stories in picture form of what they wanted for their union in ten years. Drawing forced the stories to be concrete instead of abstract. In fact, many of the drawings have a direct connection to the experience of participants. Dante features in one of the Polish actors' stories, and clear skies in those of outdoor broadcasting professionals. The use of a longer timeframe (ten years) encouraged bolder visions.



SECTION 4

Reflecting on services



This section highlights some examples that arose in the course of the project, where unions were interested in exploring more of a services model to reach out to members and potential members. There is a strong consensus among many trade unions and those interested in trade union organising that provision of services is not in itself a strong basis for union organising. Without a meaningful and conscious connection to the union and its core values, members may remain footloose and disengage once they no longer have a use for a given service or find a different provider. It may also encourage a passive attitude whereby members simply rely on services but do not feel any connection to the wider goals of the union or any personal implication in furthering them. That being said, meaningful services can be a strong part of how members interact with the unions and the experience in this project points to the finding that the most appreciated and used services are those that are directly connected to the professional situation or career development of the union member. Thus services such as access to training or legal advice on contracting are among those that are felt a concrete difference to the working lives of the union members.

In unions with the resources to offer meaningful services, they can offer a vehicle to connect with members and reinforce their link to the union. They can offer a win-win by leveraging union density to deliver benefit to the whole membership. Reflection on provision services can be a very worthwhile part of a larger strategy on reaching out to members. Some of the participating unions were interested in the potential of services to allow them to connect to members in a practical way and new or renewed ideas were discussed in several national meetings.



In Sweden some time was spent explaining to the board and the staff at [TEATERFÖRBUNDET](#) how the model of blending both servicing and organising to attract members to the union can work in reality. Using professional development training courses for members as a service to the membership, and developing a programme of courses by consulting the membership on what they want from their union can pay off over time and the union can grow, whilst attracting new activists more interested in an organising model of engagement. Not every member will go on to be an activist and organiser, but members can be encouraged to remain in the union with an

'After a great organising session with the trainer, we realised the importance of training for our members. Now we have kicked off a one-day education for Head of Departments in the film sector. The training has turned out to be very popular and we get new members every time it takes place.'

film sector in Sweden. This training is for members only and so in order to access it new and potential members have been joining the union. The training has been delivered regionally for heads of department and includes Health & Safety, Scheduling, Work Environment Legislation and Harassment training.

Teaterförbundet Health and Safety Officer, Eleonor Fahlén comments 'After a great organising session with the trainer, we realised the importance of training for our members. Now we have kicked off a one-day education for Head of Departments in the film sector. The training has turned out to be very popular and we get new members every time it takes place.'

In the UK, BECTU, alongside sister union Equity for performers, has a long history with its public liability insurance offer to members and when discussing this with other creative unions always provokes a lively discussion. Unions can see the potential benefit to their own recruitment and retention campaigns for freelance members, whilst recognising that it is a big commitment on the part of the union. Teaterförbundet were interested in this model as a service to members who may currently be providing their own insurances in order to work freelance within the industry; this is costly and, if provided at a discount by the union, could help both individual members and the union itself. Currently Teaterförbundet has an insurance for members that isn't as comprehensive as other insurances, so they were looking for new ideas from other unions.

During the training some time was spent looking at the need for wide appeal across the different areas of membership within the union, and the fact that one size does not fit all. The need to regularly adapt the offer and add services related to career progression for members is important for creative unions, alongside the more traditional union support around activism and solidarity.

attractive package of support and development. New members can also be attracted to the union based purely on the services on offer – many new reps/activists have come to more active union activity through this route.

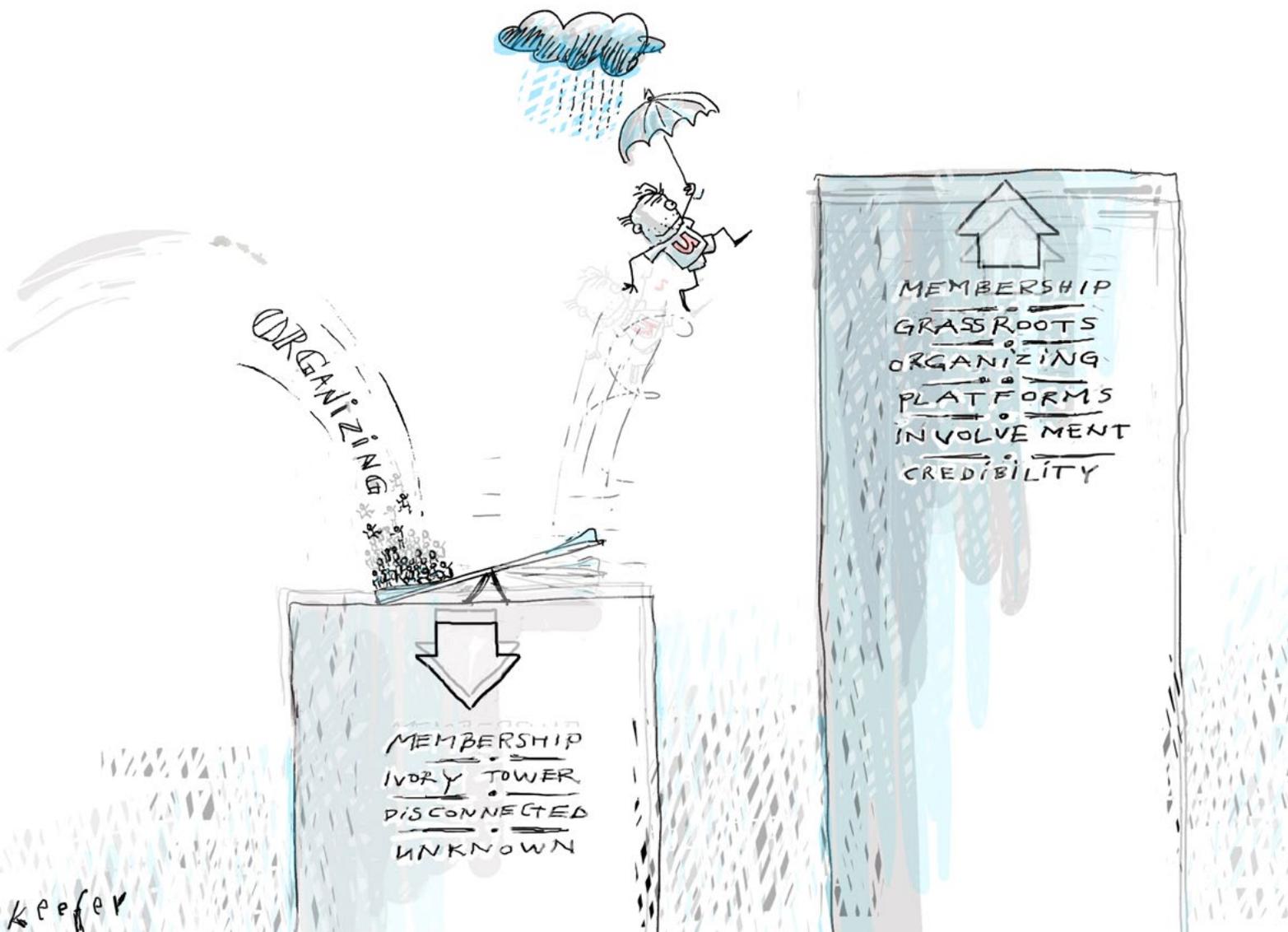
As a direct result of in depth discussions between the Teaterförbundet team and the project trainer deliberating this blended organising/servicing approach to building the union, Teaterförbundet has developed and delivered a number of ongoing training courses to support members working in the

In Poland, ZZAP initially asked for training focused on developing and marketing additional services for their members. However, it became apparent at the first training that most of the services ZZAP had developed (insurance for long-term disability, protocols around various workplace issues, other solutions for individual problems) had resulted in little to no membership growth, with the exception of casting workshops. Further, the member activists were more concerned about declining incomes and systemic problems than about individual employment issues that could be addressed with services. The trainer's advice was to expand the one service that delivered new members (the casting workshops) instead of developing a menu of additional, individual services. This choice allowed the union more resources to develop and launch its minimum rates campaign.



SECTION 5

Taking action and mobilising for change



Keefer

This seeks to capture an overview of some of the organising actions taken by the participating unions, directly, or indirectly, arising from the project and relating to the work with the trainers:

MINIMUM RATES CAMPAIGN, POLAND

The Polish Actors' Union ZZAP began a minimum rates campaign to turn around the income of freelance actors in television. This is the largest campaign done by ZZAP, prepared with the union trainer. The campaign began with research into members' pay rates over the last fifteen years, which revealed a substantial decrease in daily rates in both television and commercials. Actors chose to focus on television rates first, because it was a larger portion of members' incomes.

After the research, they began regular meetings – announced via sponsored Facebook posts – for all actors (members and non-members). Every sponsored Facebook post reached about 15 000 users and received around 60 likes, 30 comments



and 20 shares. This reached more actors, some of whom did not even know about the existence of the union. After each meeting a few non-members have decided to join. From the end of October 2019 until the beginning of January 2020 that has meant a 10% increase in membership. Once the union has a large enough organisation of actors, the focus will shift from information about pay to winning a minimum rate.

"We managed to change the organisation of the union and found more hands to help. New members suggested they can help us in the organisation of the workshops for the members (self-tape and casting workshops, etc.)... We have started a dialogue with the agents and agencies and found a common goal. We've organised 3 meetings with the representatives of the major acting agencies in Poland... We're planning to organise regional meetings, outside Warsaw. There will be the first regional meeting in the south of Poland – in Cracow on 20th January... The project woke up many non-active members, we receive many e-mails, calls and questions about the union actions and how they can help." (ZZAP)



NVJ – ACTION BY PHOTO JOURNALISTS AND SUCCESSFUL COURT CASE

Superficially, there is a lot that the union does that could be classified as organising. You can join easily, there is a student/new to journalism pathway, there are work committees. However, speaking to the union, it was hard to see how all of these elements worked together to build the house. With the threat of employers moving away from the sectoral collective agreements, the need for the union as others in the Netherlands, to consider their working practices was high.

The campaign began with outreach and discussions with photojournalists culminating in an initial action in January 2019 where photos were withheld from newspapers and other publications. This initial tactic would in any other area count as ‘strike action’ and is quite remarkable that the union was able to engage freelancers enough to take this step.

During 2019, the campaign regrouped and began to develop a strategy and plan to engage more photojournalists from a broader spectrum while at the same time moving towards a legal outcome for setting rates. On the legal front, the union has received a ground-breaking judgement on setting rates. Lower than the union would have wanted but still raises the bar for workers and employers.

On the back of this success, the union has launched its first campaign phase of the new strategy which included workplace visits, one to ones, and campaign meetings with existing activists. The goal here was to increase the activist base of freelancers while also engaging workers on their key issues and the wider campaign. By the end of the year they had 63 photojournalists signed up as active volunteers and 300 photojournalist agree that a campaign for better pay is a good idea and an increase in membership of 10%.

COMBINING STAFFERS AND ACTIVISTS IN A JOINT TRAINING ON LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY, IRISH EQUITY GROUP AND THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR/SIPTU IRELAND

The training in Ireland aimed at renewing and refreshing the engagement with the aims and principles of organising, for union staffers and union activists alike. By coming together, there was a renewed sense of shared responsibility for organising, rather than a feeling that it is the role of someone else. Together the group looked at how every aspect of the union’s work can tie into organising and how to take each opportunity that arises to reach out to new and potential members. Overall, the training reinforced a shared sense of ownership and pride around the union as a basis for outreach. It reflected back how the union aims to grow into an ever stronger stakeholder in the industry. Union activist Gerry O’ Brien summed his thoughts on the experience saying *“Communicate. Communicate to each and every member every positive outcome that we achieve. Communication ties a disparate membership together.”*

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION, TEATERFORBUNDET, SWEDEN

The impact of the project in Sweden for Teaterförbundet is already evident through the development and delivery of new professional development training courses and the direct growth in membership. There has been a concerted effort to communicate the project to the wider membership through articles in the members' magazine and a regular newsletter to members (see PDF from magazine with translation). This is the beginning of the journey for Teaterförbundet as they seek a new name and identity for the future.

SLOVENIA: DEVELOPING A BROAD CAMPAIGN WITH DIFFERENT TARGETED ACTIONS

For a small association ZDUS in Slovenia punches above its weight with a dedicated team of hard-working active members. Through the project training they refined and identified their activity and came up with a set of specific tasks with everyone playing a role in planning to recruit more active members. They looked at a streamlined organisation through better communications, GDPR compliance, coverage in the local press of their survey around well-being and the agreed new performers clinic alongside a

proposed name change. This was all to be presented at their general assembly meeting in late December 2019. The project has definitely brought members together and given them the opportunity for open and honest dialogue in an informal setting to instigate change for ZDUS.

Active member Barbara Skubic comments *'We had our General Meeting in December, and briefly presented what we did during the training. Although the meeting was dedicated to electing the new president and his presentation of the agenda and progress with all things involving the clinic, he is very open to talking with us and our enthusiasm caused interest amongst our colleagues who did not participate in the training to get involved in activities. Separately, I attended a meeting in Hamburg in December, and I got some more ideas on how to run a cost-effective brand/visibility campaign that will hopefully translate into more active membership and more influence for ZDUS.'*

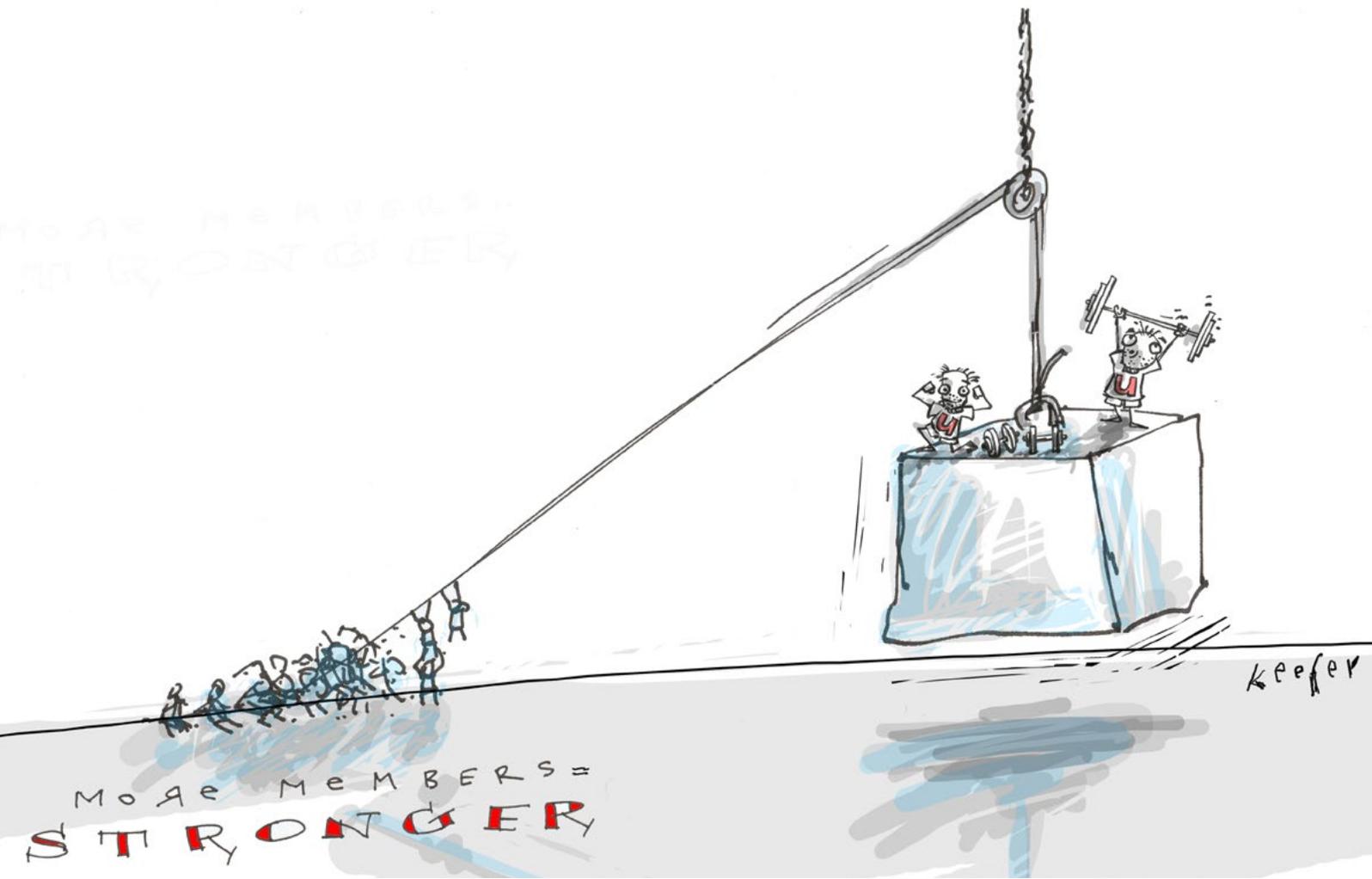
TRANSFORMING ONLINE ACTION INTO SUSTAINABLE ORGANISING – KUNSTENBOND

Prior to involvement with the project, the Platform for Freelance Musicians working with the Kunstenbond had created a vibrant online community of freelance musicians interested in raising standards in their field. The Platform's Facebook group had 2500 members, and members were featured many times in the news. Amongst musicians, there were widespread discussions for the first time about whether freelancers deserved to be paid as much as employed musicians and how the Netherlands could pay musicians and other artists a living wage. But this increase in awareness had neither resulted in collective action nor in membership growth. Specific actions coming out of the trainings included additional (trained) freelance member activists, the first collective actions for freelance musicians, and a plan for escalating actions around the union contract for freelance classical musicians. The first collective action was a photo campaign on social media with group photos of all freelance musicians and a positive hashtag, *#WeMakeItPossible* or (in Dutch) *#WijMakenHetMogelijk*. Participants noted that appearing in the group photos made them a little nervous—a good sign in organising that a group is getting stronger.



SECTION 6

Conclusions and challenges for the future



At the final conference in Dublin, the trainers and unions shared some of their thoughts about the experience and what can make a difference in terms of union organising. **Some basic general principles emerged:**

The small actions matter - make it easy to join online. Rates should be clear, and the union should be able to monitor what the trigger is for joining. Freelancers aren't necessarily in a workplace so decreasing the barriers to joining is critical. Having a simple online joining process, with a website which encourages freelancers where they can see themselves can have a big impact. That process should allow the union to understand which recruiting processes are working.

Do not underestimate the impact of one-to-one conversations. These are the backbone of organising. They are worth reflecting on and working to maximise their impact. Empowering activists to have them in a positive mind-set is a worthy undertaking.

Student membership may be the key to a future freelance membership - attracting colleagues before they become freelancers and engaging them in activities that they are interested in from that moment is a good way to engage them at an early stage in their career. This also means having a clear pathway from student to full membership.

Engagement on the issues that members care about and including them in the solution. This approach is based on member involvement. It means finding out what these members care about and ask them to fashion the solutions for themselves. Ask them to ask colleagues to join. This changes basis for engagement and encourages solidarity.

Give union members a sense of community. The union is a natural collective community which can be missing from the lives of freelancers. Give people the opportunity to get together, share their experiences and make connections.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS:

The participating unions shared very different experiences arising from the project. But it was clear that for each in their own situation and circumstances, the tailored approach and targeted support has delivered real results.

IEG/SIPTU Ireland, TF Sweden, ZZAP Poland, NVJ Netherlands reported that the training has delivered a measurable and significant increase in membership in the life-time of the project, ranging from a slight upwards curve to a substantial growth surge. All have the ambition of continuing to grow the union continuing and further developing the campaigning actions and outreach that they have put in place.

ZDUS Slovenia, the Serbian Musicians' Union and SNJ-CGT France reported on a substantial change of perspective and vision, with a renewed energy to take organising work in a new direction, with potential actions being developed to have a real organising and growth strategy that was previously lacking. In-depth exchanges had created a new shared basis for this work and all the unions expressed their commitment to taking it forward.

The Finnish Musicians' Union and Kunstenbond in its partnership with the Platform for Freelance Musici had taken the time in the course of the project to review and reinforce ongoing existing actions that aim to grow the union, extend its reach and partnerships and make it stronger. There was strategic reflection on how to improve systems that are already in place or add value to actions that are working for members, in order to deliver more engagement with the union. Both felt that having this space was a valuable way to reflect on wider organising goals and link them always back to targeted actions and services that are underway. Reaching out to members and providing union services must always link back also to developing union power and bringing the members along on the organising journey.

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Illustrations by Caspar De Kieffe.