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► Media workshop report

**Workshop on decent work and fundamental
labour rights in the press, broadcasting
and journalism sector**

11–12 June 2026, Ankara



International
Labour
Organization

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Workshop on decent work and fundamental labour rights in the press, broadcasting and journalism sector

► Executive summary

The “Decent Work and Fundamental Labour Rights in the Press, Broadcasting and Journalism Sector Workshop” was held in Ankara on 11–12 June 2026 within the scope of the “Strengthening the Capacities of Social Partners and Civil Society on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work” Project, implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Türkiye with the financial support of the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye.

The workshop brought together trade unions, employers’ representatives, journalists, academics, relevant public institutions and civil society organizations operating in the media sector. In addition to expert presentations and a panel involving trade union representatives, four thematic working groups were organized under the headings of

- 1 Employment and job security,
- 2 Gender equality and non-discrimination,
- 3 Social protection and access to rights,
- 4 New forms of work.

On the first day, the working groups discussed the current situation and key challenges, while the second day focused on possible solutions.

The discussions highlighted job insecurity, low wages, informal employment, long working hours, loss of rights resulting from different employment statuses, and difficulties in accessing social protection among the main challenges in the media sector. In particular, freelance journalists, journalists working on a fee/royalty basis and project-based workers were considered to be in a more vulnerable position in terms of income continuity and access to fundamental labour rights such as social security, annual leave, severance pay and un-

employment insurance. It was also emphasized that gaps between rights provided under the existing legislation and their implementation in practice could result in significant erosion of rights for workers.

With regard to gender equality, participants noted that women may face various inequalities in access to employment, career development, remuneration and representation in decision-making mechanisms, while long working hours and care responsibilities may adversely affect women’s retention and career progression in the sector. Violence and harassment in the world of work, difficulties in reporting incidents due to fear of retaliation, and the need for safe reporting mechanisms were also among the issues highlighted during the discussions.

Participants further noted that digitalization, freelance work and platform-based forms of work are significantly transforming employment relations in the media sector, while the existing legal and institutional framework does not always adequately respond to the needs arising from these new forms of work. It was considered that this transformation creates new policy needs, particularly in relation to determining employment status, access to social protection, intellectual property rights and opportunities for organizing.

The solutions proposed during the workshop focused on the effective implementation of existing labour legislation and the Press Labour Law; strengthening enforcement and inspection mechanisms to combat informal employment; developing social protection models suitable for different forms of work; promoting written contracts; supporting trade union organizing; and strengthening social dialogue mechanisms. Other recommendations included advancing gender equality across all areas of working life, improving access to care services, developing safe and independent grievance and reporting mechanisms against violence and harassment, and strengthening occupational safety and health measures, pro-

tective equipment and psychosocial support mechanisms for journalists working in high-risk environments.

This report has been prepared to systematically compile the views, experiences and recommendations expressed during the workshop. The assessments presented in the report reflect the views expressed by workshop participants and do not represent the official position of any institution. The report is intended to provide a shared basis for knowledge and discussion for future work aimed at promoting decent working conditions and fundamental labour rights in the media sector.

► Background

The Project aims to strengthen fundamental principles and rights at work in Türkiye and to enhance the knowledge, advocacy and social dialogue capacities of social partners and civil society organizations. Within this framework, the Project undertakes various activities, including research, training, grant support and workshops, aimed at assessing the current situation regarding fundamental labour rights across different sectors and thematic areas, identifying sector-specific challenges, and supporting dialogue and joint efforts to develop solutions among relevant stakeholders.

In addition to its critical role in the functioning of democratic societies, the press, broadcasting and journalism sector is one of the sectors undergoing significant structural changes in the

world of work as a result of digitalization, changing forms of employment and technological developments. This transformation presents both new opportunities and challenges in areas such as job security, working conditions, social protection, freedom of association and gender equality for media workers.

Against this background, the “Decent Work and Fundamental Labour Rights in the Press, Broadcasting and Journalism Sector Workshop” was organized to bring together representatives of workers’ and employers’ organizations, journalists, academics, public institutions and civil society organizations operating in the sector, with a view to assessing the current situation through a multi-stakeholder approach and developing common solutions.

► Workshop design and methodology

The workshop was designed on the basis of a participatory and interactive methodology that enabled key challenges relating to working life in the media sector to be assessed in light of the knowledge, views and experiences of stakeholders with direct experience in the sector. Accordingly, information-sharing through expert presentations and panel sessions was complemented by thematic discussions designed to encourage the active participation and engagement of participants.

The main objective of the workshop methodology was to enable participants from different institutional and professional backgrounds not only to identify existing problems, but also to discuss their causes and implications for working life, compare different experiences and develop possible solutions.

For this purpose, participants were divided into four thematic working groups based on their areas of interest and expertise:

- 1 Employment and job security;
- 2 Gender equality and non-discrimination;
- 3 Social protection and access to rights;
- 4 New forms of work.

A facilitator and rapporteur were assigned in advance to each working group, and discussions were conducted on the basis of structured common sets of questions. During the first day, the groups addressed the current situation, key challenges and underlying causes within each thematic area; on the second day, they discussed possible solutions and policy areas based on the challenges identified. This approach aimed to ensure that assessments emerging under the different themes could be considered within a common framework and that cross-cutting challenges and recommendations could be identified.

Detailed session notes prepared by the group rapporteurs constituted the main source for the preparation of this report. Assessments contained in the notes were classified thematically, similar views were consolidated and repetitive statements were streamlined. Throughout this process, particular care was taken to preserve the substance and meaning of the key views, experiences and recommendations expressed by participants.

Accordingly, the report presents a systematic synthesis of the views expressed during the workshop and makes it possible to identify areas of convergence and divergence among the assessments of different stakeholders.

► Participants

The workshop was organized with a multi-stakeholder approach that brought together different perspectives on working life in the media sector. Representatives of trade unions, employers, as well as journalists, academics, relevant public institutions and civil society organizations participated in the workshop.

The profile of participants working in the sector included professionals from national and local media organizations, print media, television, digital media and printing and publishing. This diversity contributed to a comparative assessment of

how similar challenges manifest themselves under different working conditions.

Throughout the round-table discussions, participants shared not only their institutional perspectives but also their professional experiences, enabling numerous concrete examples and possible solutions relating to practice to emerge. The active participation of academics, civil society organizations and trade union representatives also contributed to a detailed discussion of the working conditions and rights of media workers.

► Implementation of the workshop

The workshop consisted of complementary sessions, including opening sessions, technical presentations, panel discussions and thematic group work. Throughout the programme, information-sharing sessions aimed at establishing a common conceptual framework among participants were combined with participatory discussions based on the exchange of experiences and views.

At the opening of the workshop, Mr Yasser Hassan, Director of the ILO Office for Türkiye, shared his observations on the importance of strengthening fundamental principles and rights at work and the role of social dialogue mechanisms in this process. This was followed by a presentation by Mr Emre Dönmez, Senior Project Coordinator at the ILO Office for Türkiye, introducing the project, its objectives and main areas of activity, as well as the role of the workshop within the project.

On the first day of the workshop, **Dr. Çağrı Kaderoğlu Bulut, faculty member at the Faculty of Communication of Ankara University**, delivered a presentation on recent developments concerning labour rights and working conditions in the media sector. The presentation covered the employment structure of the sector, changes in employment relations and the main challenges faced by media workers, thereby establishing a common basis for the subsequent group discussions.

On the second day, **Prof. Dr Refik Korkusuz, faculty member at the Faculty of Law of Dokuz Eylül University**, addressed recent developments in media law, the legal status of press workers and the rights provided under the Press Labour

Law. The presentation particularly considered the challenges faced by freelance journalists and the effectiveness of existing legal safeguards in practice, emphasizing the importance of effectively implementing existing rights rather than relying primarily on new regulation, as well as the need for workers and trade unions to play a more active role in this process.

The programme also included a panel entitled **“Access to Labour Rights in the Media from the Perspective of Trade Unions”**, with the participation of representatives of trade unions organized in the media sector. Moderated by **Ms. Esra İsen, Communications Officer at the ILO Office for Türkiye**, the panel brought together **Mr. Sinan Özer** (Vice President of MEDYA-İŞ), **Mr. Nail Dertli** (Advisor to the President of TÜRK-İŞ BASIN-İŞ), **Mr. Gökhan Durmuş** (President of the Journalists’ Union of Türkiye - TGS) and **Mr. Turgut Dedeoğlu** (President of DİSK Basın-İş). The panellists shared trade union experiences, priorities and proposed solutions concerning media workers’ access to fundamental labour rights.

The thematic group work, which constituted the main part of the workshop, was conducted in three sessions over the two days. On the first day, participants assessed the current situation and key challenges on the basis of pre-defined sets of questions, while the second day focused on developing solutions under the same themes. During the closing session, the rapporteur of each group presented the main findings and recommendations emerging from the discussions to all participants, enabling cross-cutting issues and priority policy areas to be jointly considered.

► Outcomes of the thematic working groups

► Employment and job security

Under the theme of employment and job security, participants highlighted the increasing precariousness of employment in the media sector and the fact that a significant

proportion of workers face insecure working conditions. Participants discussed a wide range of challenges, from recruitment and dismissals to wage policies and editorial pressure. Young journalists, women, freelance workers and local media workers were particularly identified as groups in more vulnerable positions.

Recruitment processes and merit

Participants stated that transparency and merit principles are not always observed in recruitment processes and that personal connections, institutional affiliations and informal networks within the sector may influence employment decisions. It was noted that low wages and limited career opportunities in local media organizations lead qualified workers to leave the sector. Participants also observed that a significant proportion of communication faculty graduates move to other sectors within a relatively short period of time.

Job security and working conditions

During the group discussions, job security was commonly identified as one of the main challenges in the media sector. Low wages, employment under different social security statuses, informal employment, long working hours and assigning multiple roles to a single worker were listed among frequently encountered problems. Participants stated that, in particular, the inability to effectively benefit from rights provided under the Press Labour Law results in significant erosion of rights.

Mobbing, pressure and freedom of expression

Participants stated that mobbing practices and fear of dismissal create significant psychological pressure on workers in the media sector. It was noted that journalists may face mobbing, pressure, intimidation and various sanctions following their critical reporting on institutions or individuals with which media organizations have close political or commercial relations. Changes in duty stations, withholding work assignments, reputational attacks, punitive transfers/reassignments and editorial pressure were among the practices most frequently mentioned. The discussions also emphasized that concerns relating to job security may directly affect journalists' professional independence, news production processes and freedom of expression, and that preventing journalists from producing or covering particular stories may constitute a significant restriction on freedom of expression.

Groups most affected

Young journalists, women journalists, journalists working on a fee/royalty basis, freelance workers and project-based workers were considered to be disproportionately affected by the existing challenges. Workers in local media organizations were also considered to be in a more vulnerable position because of low wages, limited social benefits and restricted career opportunities.

Solutions proposed by participants

Participants proposed strengthening merit and transparency in recruitment; supporting trade union organizing; expanding opportunities for journalists' professional development; ensuring the effective implementation of the Press Labour Law; regulating working hours; protecting the intellectual property rights of content producers; developing support measures addressing care responsibilities of women journalists; and establishing independent grievance and reporting mechanisms against mobbing and workplace pressure. Participants also

frequently referred to the need for a comprehensive regulatory framework for the journalism profession setting out professional standards and ethical principles.

► Gender equality and non-discrimination

Under the theme of gender equality and non-discrimination, assessments highlighting the multiple inequalities that women and other disadvantaged groups may face—from access to employment and career development to remuneration and representation in decision-making mechanisms—came to the fore. Participants stated that gender stereotypes continue to influence many areas of working life and may adversely affect working conditions, retention in the sector and promotion processes.

Access to employment and discrimination in working life

Participants noted that, while developments in digital media in recent years have created new employment opportunities that facilitate women's entry into the media sector, unemployment and informal employment were still considered to be more prevalent among women than men. It was also stated that asking women questions about marriage, plans to have children and care responsibilities during recruitment processes may create grounds for discriminatory practices and adversely affect women's access to employment.

The discussions highlighted that women and men in the media sector tend to be concentrated in different roles and areas of work in line with gender stereotypes, with important implications for equal access to employment and career progression. Participants stated that this may lead to inequalities in job satisfaction, wage levels, access to professional training and development opportunities, and promotion prospects.

Participants further stated that LGBTQ+ workers may encounter discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, with adverse effects on access to employment, working conditions, career development and their ability to express themselves safely in the workplace.

Work-life balance

One of the issues most frequently highlighted during the group discussions was that domestic work and unpaid care responsibilities continue to be borne predominantly by women. Participants stated that long and irregular working hours, night and weekend work, and inadequate access to care services make it more difficult for women to reconcile work and family life. This was considered to contribute, particularly after childbirth, to women leaving the sector, reducing their working hours or experiencing setbacks in their career development.

Limited availability of accessible, quality childcare services and the fact that childcare responsibilities remain predominantly borne by women were identified as key structural challenges. Participants also noted that, as population ageing increases care needs, responsibility for elderly care is likewise largely

assumed by women, while the limited capacity of elderly care services further increases this burden.

Participants further emphasized that caring responsibilities relating to persons with disabilities and patients requiring long-term care also constitute an important factor affecting participation in working life, and that support services in these areas should be strengthened.

Decision-making and representation

Participants stated that women remain underrepresented in senior management and decision-making positions in the media sector, while invisible barriers commonly referred to as the “glass ceiling” adversely affect women’s career progression and access to leadership positions. Similar challenges were also reported within trade unions and professional organizations, where women were considered to be insufficiently represented in governing bodies and decision-making processes.

Participants assessed that the limited representation of women in management positions makes it more difficult to achieve gender equality in the sector and may contribute to the persistence of gender pay inequalities. Participants also stated that wage differences may exist between women and men performing the same work or work of equal value, and that these differences may result from a lack of transparent wage policies and structural gender inequalities.

Violence, harassment and a safe working environment

Gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work was identified by participants as an important challenge in the media sector. It was stated that incidents of violence and harassment may occur at different stages of working life, from recruitment processes and field assignments to news coverage and everyday workplace relations. Participants noted that many incidents are not reported because of fear of losing one’s job, concerns about stigmatization and the risk of retaliation, making the problem less visible and more difficult to address effectively. It was also noted during the discussions that media workers may face pressure, threats and harassment from public institutions, private-sector representatives or other external actors as a result of the news content they produce.

Participants stated that social movements and public discussions in Türkiye and around the world in recent years have contributed significantly to increasing the visibility of violence and harassment in the world of work, encouraging survivors to share their experiences and raising awareness. These developments were also considered to have had a deterrent effect on employers and managers. Nevertheless, participants noted that many workers remain reluctant to report violence and harassment because of concerns about possible negative consequences.

Solutions proposed by participants

Participants developed a range of policy and practical recommendations to strengthen gender equality in the media

sector. These included the effective application of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value; stronger inclusion of gender equality provisions in collective bargaining agreements; improvement of parental leave arrangements; and implementation of policies that promote a more balanced sharing of care responsibilities. Participants also recommended improving access to quality and accessible childcare, elderly care and care services for persons with disabilities and persons requiring long-term care; increasing incentives for childcare facilities; and ensuring that flexible working arrangements are regulated in a manner that does not result in loss of rights.

The importance of increasing awareness and institutional capacity on gender equality was also highlighted. In this regard, participants proposed that gender equality training should be designed as inclusive programmes not only for workers but also for managers and, where appropriate, family members. Stronger integration of gender equality issues into the curricula of communication faculties was also considered an important contribution for journalists entering the profession.

Participants further emphasized the importance of establishing independent grievance and reporting mechanisms that enable incidents of violence and harassment in the world of work to be reported safely and confidentially, strengthening safeguards against retaliation and ensuring the effective functioning of such mechanisms. Finally, participants underlined the need for the ratification and effective implementation of international labour standards relating to equality in the world of work, non-discrimination and the prevention of violence and harassment, particularly ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment.

► Social protection and access to rights

Under the theme of social protection and access to rights, participants stated that access to social security rights in the media sector varies significantly depending on the form of employment. Particular attention was drawn to the higher risk of freelance, project-based and irregular workers remaining outside social protection mechanisms, while implementation-related losses of entitlements were also highlighted for formally registered workers.

Access to social security under different forms of employment

Participants stated that workers registered under Article 4(a) of the social security system have relatively easier access to social security and pension rights, while freelance workers, journalists working on a fee/royalty basis and project-based workers may be unable to maintain continuous contribution periods and often remain outside the social security system. The absence of written contracts, irregular income and undeclared cash payments were identified as key challenges affecting these groups of workers.

The press labour law and access to rights

During the group discussions, participants emphasized the importance of rights provided to journalists under the Press Labour Law, including severance pay, annual leave and additional service credit. However, it was noted that many workers are unable to effectively benefit from these rights because they are registered under different social security statuses. Participants stated that gaps between the rights provided for in legislation and their implementation in practice may prevent workers from effectively exercising these rights.

Informal employment and structural challenges

Participants considered that challenges in the area of social protection extend beyond individual rights-related problems and also reflect broader structural issues. Informal employment, uncertainties regarding employment status, difficulties in accessing press cards, shortcomings in organizing and the inability of existing legislation to adequately cover different forms of work were identified as structural challenges. Difficulties faced by trade unions in reaching irregular workers were also discussed.

Journalists working in high-risk assignments

The working conditions of journalists deployed to earthquake, disaster, war and crisis zones were also specifically addressed. Participants stated that workers operating in such environments face not only physical risks but also psychosocial impacts, and emphasized the need to strengthen insurance coverage, training, protective equipment and psychosocial support mechanisms.

Solutions proposed by participants

Participants proposed developing new models to facilitate the more effective inclusion of freelance workers in the social security system; determining social security status based on actual working conditions rather than solely on the formal legal characterization of the employment relationship; strengthening inspection and enforcement mechanisms to combat informal employment; and ensuring more effective implementation of the provisions of the Press Labour Law. Participants also emphasized the importance of increasing journalists' awareness of their social security rights and promoting written contracts that take account of different forms of work in order to prevent workers from being deprived of their rights and entitlements.

Participants stressed the importance of recognizing freelance journalists who in practice work within a dependent employment relationship as workers and ensuring that employers fulfil the corresponding social security obligations. More comprehensive social protection policies capable of covering different forms of work in the media sector were also considered a priority area for strengthening decent working conditions in the sector.

In addition, participants recommended strengthening occupational safety and health measures for journalists working in high-risk environments such as disasters, crises and conflict settings, and expanding access to appropriate protective equipment, psychosocial support and other protective mechanisms.

► New forms of work

Under the theme of new forms of work, participants highlighted that digitalization and technological transformation are significantly changing employment relations in the media sector. Participants particularly noted the growing prevalence of freelance work, digital content production and platform-based working models, while considering that the existing legal and institutional framework has not adapted to this transformation at the same pace.

Growing prevalence of freelance and platform-based work

Participants stated that traditional employment models are increasingly being replaced by more flexible forms of work, particularly project-based and freelance models in digital media. At the same time, these forms of work were considered to create significant uncertainty in relation to income stability, job security and social protection.

Access to labour rights

During the group discussions, participants stated that workers engaged in new forms of work face significant difficulties in accessing rights such as freedom of association, fair remuneration, social security, annual leave, severance pay and unemployment insurance.

Legislation

Participants stated that existing labour and social security legislation is largely based on traditional employment relationships and therefore does not adequately cover digital and platform-based forms of work.

Solutions proposed by participants

Participants recommended developing arrangements that enable workers in new forms of work to be included in social protection systems; promoting written contracts; protecting intellectual property rights; strengthening opportunities for platform workers to organize; and developing social dialogue mechanisms among public institutions, employers and trade unions.

► Conclusion

The workshop provided an opportunity to address the multiple challenges relating to decent work and fundamental labour rights in the media sector through the knowledge and experiences of different stakeholders. When the discussions across the four thematic working groups are considered together, job insecurity, low wages, informal employment, long working hours, loss of entitlements arising from different employment statuses, and difficulties in accessing social protection emerge as the main cross-cutting challenges. Participants also stated that freelance workers, journalists working on a fee/royalty basis and project-based workers, as well as women, young journalists and local media workers, may be more severely affected by some of these challenges.

The discussions highlighted that challenges concerning working conditions in the media sector cannot be explained solely by gaps in legislation and that implementation-related areas—including the effective enforcement of existing legal safeguards, improving workers' awareness of their rights, strengthening inspection mechanisms and expanding opportunities for organizing—are also important. At the same time, the increasing prevalence of digitalization, freelance work and platform-based forms of work was considered to be transforming existing employment relations and generating new needs, particularly in relation to employment status, social protection, freedom of association and organizing, and intellectual property rights.

Against this background, the recommendations expressed by participants focused on the effective implementation of existing labour legislation and the Press Labour Law; strengthening enforcement and inspection mechanisms to combat informal employment; ensuring that different forms of work are addressed more inclusively within social protection systems; supporting trade union organizing; and strengthening social dialogue mechanisms. Strengthening gender equality across all areas of working life, developing mechanisms that support a more balanced sharing of care responsibilities, establishing safe reporting channels against violence and harassment, and enhancing protective measures for journalists working in high-risk environments were also identified as important policy areas.

Overall, the workshop discussions indicate that strengthening decent working conditions in the media sector requires a set of complementary interventions rather than an approach relying on a single policy instrument. In this context, alongside the effective implementation of existing rights and improved access to those rights, it is important to address the protection gaps arising from changing forms of work and to develop effective social dialogue mechanisms among public institutions, workers' and employers' organizations, professional organizations, academia and civil society.



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