



The Union

for Freelance Workers



**United
Freelancers**



Why do I need a union if I am a freelancer?

The ACV-CSC acknowledges that an increasing number of workers no longer work under an employment contract (as an employee/labourer), but as freelancers.

They may have self-employed status (either as primary or secondary activity) or are in another 'autonomous' situation (such as platform workers in the collaborative economy, working through a shared company or a Bureau social pour artistes (BSA), etc.).

Journalists, for example, find themselves in this situation most often (they are commonly referred to as freelance journalists). The same applies to restaurant cooks, home care nurses, construction workers, aestheticians, childcare workers, as well as accountants, translators, real estate agents, drivers/delivery workers (whether platform-based or not, by bike or lorry), etc.

While the 'traditional' self-employed person works independently (such as shopkeepers in their own shop, for example), many freelancers work for a main 'principal'; they sign a 'service contract', must comply with various rules, etc.

The ACV-CSC also acknowledges that more and more workers have mixed careers, working successively or simultaneously under different employment statuses. For example, an employee (or a worker who is disabled or retired) may also work as a self-employed person on a supplementary basis.

There is a common misconception out there: *"Since I'm self-employed, I don't need a union (after all, I'm my own boss, aren't I?)"*. The labour law protections do not apply to freelance workers, often making their situation even more insecure than that of employees. Not only are they paid below-standard rates, but they are also expected to be fully flexible and regularly have to contend with cancelled and/or unpaid assignments, unfair dismissal, excessive non-compete clauses, etc.

In fact, a freelancer, especially one working for other companies, needs a trade union even more than an employee.



Our vision is clear: freelance? Go for it. However, **a worker is a worker.** Differences in status do not justify less favourable treatment.

United Freelancers, from ACV-CSC

United Freelancers has been active since 2019. It is a new division of the ACV-CSC, expanding its action work, both individual and collective, to autonomous workers, self-employed workers without staff or those in similar situations.

In practical terms, if someone is a member of the ACV-CSC, they are represented by the union for both their work as an employee and their activities as a freelancer. This applies whether the freelancer is self-employed as a primary or secondary activity, an “active retiree” or a platform worker, all without any additional membership fee. This representation applies regardless of the individual's situation (employment contract, self-employment without staff, disability, unemployment, retirement, a mixed situation, etc.).

What services does United Freelancers offer?

The ACV-CSC aims to improve working conditions for all workers, both on an individual level and collectively.

Individual action

- Information and intervention
- Legal assistance for disputes related to your professional activity, including representation in court.
- Professional support: self-employed workers have many obligations (administrative, VAT, tax-related, etc.). United Freelancers identifies the most useful partnerships (accountants, lawyers, etc.).

Beyond merely providing information, United Freelancers acts on your behalf (always with your consent) with your “principal”, as well as with public authorities (RVA/Onem, FPS Finance, regional services supporting the self-employed, etc.) and social security institutions.

“Acting on your behalf” means taking your side. Other organisations for the self-employed do not intervene on your behalf with respect to your principal, simply because that principal may also be a member of their organisation.

A few examples of our recent work on individual cases:

- We review service contracts offered to you and warn you about the weaknesses and ‘traps’ they may contain;
- A freelance worker was at risk of having to pay 30,000 euros to his ‘employer’ because he decided to stop working for them. We intervened and resolved the situation;
- A freelance coach wanted to leave the school she worked for. The school demanded reimbursement in the amount of several thousand euro for so-called training costs. We challenged this, took the case to court, and our member did not have to pay any compensation;
- A delivery driver (working for a meal delivery platform) suffered an accident at work. Fedris did not acknowledge the accident because the driver was not formally under contract. We intervened and the accident was acknowledged.
- A freelance consultant faced discrimination during recruitment for an assignment. We intervened to have discrimination acknowledged;
- A street taxi driver was denied the required authorisation from the Brussels Region. We secured for him the “bridge allowance” (*droit passerelle*), which had initially been refused. We then represented him in court because the authorisation procedure had not properly been applied by the administration.

Self-employed workers without staff (who make up 71% of all self-employed workers) can become affiliated with our organisation, whether their work is a primary or secondary activity, whether they are operating as a natural person or through a company, as well as self-employed workers in similar situations (P2P platform workers, those working via a BSA or shared businesses, etc.).

NB: United Freelancers does not intervene on behalf of members in disputes with their own workers in cases where the member is an employer.

Collective action

Improving working conditions is more effective when issues are addressed collectively. When joining forces with their peers, each worker has the power to improve their situation! This is precisely the role we play as a trade union.

This work can be carried out at a company, sector, regional or national level.

Examples:

- A media company works with several hundred freelance workers (journalists, technicians, presenters and so on). United Freelancers negotiated a 'standard contract' and minimum rates with this company.
Individual freelancers may still negotiate better terms, but no one can be offered conditions less favourable than these minimum standards;
- In the artistic sectors, United Freelancers has negotiated to ensure that pay scales applicable to employees also apply to freelancers (multiplied by a coefficient to take into account costs specific to the self-employed);
- Is the collaborative economy regime a genuine breeding ground for problems? United Freelancers demands its elimination at the federal level;
- Is the social security system for self-employed workers in some respects less favourable than that for employees? Do self-employed workers with a secondary activity pay contributions that do not grant access to social rights? United Freelancers intervenes with the federal government to bring about change.

It is by organising, joining forces and defending themselves collectively that workers are able to achieve better working conditions.



Do you believe, as we do, that it is your labour that creates society's wealth, that a worker is a worker and that being a freelancer does not mean selling yourself short? Would you like to defend these principles, **together** with us? **Becoming a member means asserting and defending your position in concrete terms.**

How much does it cost? How do I become a member?

Being a member of United Freelancers automatically includes being a member of the ACV-CSC. The monthly ACV-CSC membership fee depends on the member's status, with reduced rates offered to those facing long-term disability and/or unemployment, as well as to workers in the collaborative economy. Slight variations may apply depending on the region or business sector. The exact rates can be found on the ACV-CSC website.

Joining United Freelancers means joining the ACV-CSC. Anyone wishing to become a member can take the first step by completing the affiliation form available at www.acvcsc.be/affiliate.



Union membership fees are fully deductible from your social security contributions and taxes.

Each year, you automatically receive a certificate that can be included in your professional expenses as a self-employed worker. In other words, the actual cost is less than half of the stated amount.

Find out more!

Are you not an ACV-CSC member yet, or do you have questions?

Contact United Freelancers at (+32)02/244.31.00

unitedfreelancers@acv-csc.be

 www.unitedfreelancers.be

 facebook.com/unitedfreelancersbelgium

 linkedin.com/showcase/united-freelancers



Do you work as a freelancer?

Great! But be sure to join a union!



www.unitedfreelancers.be

Do you have any questions or need our intervention as a freelancer?

Our dedicated call centre handles individual problems.

- By phone on 02/244.31.00
(Monday and Wednesday from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm;
Tuesday and Thursday from 1pm to 5pm)
- By mail: unitedfreelancers@acv-csc.be

Our staff members and delegates defend and negotiate freelancers' working conditions at companies and in sectors.



**United
Freelancers**