

# DIGITAL REVOLUTION TOOLKIT

# Digital Revolution Tools for Workers

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The background features a photograph of a modern building with a grid-like facade, overlaid with a vibrant red and blue color scheme. Abstract geometric shapes, including circles, arcs, and lines, are scattered across the image, creating a dynamic and futuristic aesthetic.

**This toolkit is the one-stop shop for all your digital needs to face the challenges of the future.**

**Whether your aim is to gain visibility, recruit and retain members, or to campaign in the digital sphere, this toolkit has what you need for success.**

# FOREWORD



In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and shifting socioeconomic landscapes, trade unions find themselves at a critical juncture. Traditional ways of doing things aren't working as well as they used to. Structures and methods that once underpinned our effectiveness are being challenged by a multitude of factors, necessitating a profound re-evaluation of our strategies and approaches. Now, more than ever, the call for digital trade-unionism echoes with urgency and importance.

This toolkit comes from a comprehensive two-year project led by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). It's been funded by the European Union and aims to help national trade unions deal with the digital world, boost their membership, and stick to their core values.

During this project, we've seen some real-time problems that unions are up against. Membership numbers are dropping, especially with younger people. New precarious types of jobs, flexibilisation of the labour market and platformisation are making it harder for unions to reach workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated trends towards teleworking and non-standard forms of employment, while simultaneously eroding the communal spaces of large workplaces where union solidarity once thrived. All of this is making it tougher for unions to connect with members. In parallel, the rise of far-right ideologies poses a direct threat to the fundamental principles of social justice and workers' rights that unions champion.

The world around is constantly changing and this has a direct effect on how we live, work and communicate. Have trade unions been changing fast enough to keep up the pace? Are we even ready and willing to go on this journey of a renewal? To tackle the challenges of today, trade unions need to embrace digital tools, and new ways of reaching out to people, developing new engagement strategies, and innovative organising techniques.

It is within this context that this toolkit finds its purpose — to serve as a roadmap for communication departments and campaigning staff seeking to revitalise their unions and amplify their impact in the digital sphere.

The insights contained within these pages are not abstract theories but rather practical wisdom distilled from the collective experiences of five national workshops, the guidance of our project's Steering Committee, and the invaluable contributions of ETUC's members. They represent a synthesis of lessons learned, best practices identified, and innovative strategies devised to confront the challenges of our time. They're practical tips and strategies to help unions thrive in the digital age.

May this toolkit serve as a beacon of inspiration and empowerment, guiding us towards a trade union renewal and a future where trade unions stand as vibrant champions of social justice and equality in the digital age.

In solidarity,

**Tea Jarc, ETUC Confederal Secretary**



# Challenge 1: LACK OF RESOURCES



## Challenge 1: Lack of resources

Lack of financial and human resources, equipment, and the skills of existing staff are the number one issue for many organisations when it comes to digital communications and organising. Although the extent of this problem varies, it is not uncommon to find that one person is responsible for everything to do with communications, from writing press releases to creating social media posts and managing the organisation's web page.

However, each of these tasks requires very different skills and training, making it essential to have enough experienced staff and resources. This is particularly true in the ever-changing digital world, where there is a constant need to adapt to new functions and tools, and where one set of skills can become obsolete overnight. So what can you do when your resources are limited?

### Solution 1: Make it a priority for the organisation

You cannot cut your way to growth. Sometimes communications and digital tools lead to limited or undesirable results, thus bringing decision makers to the conclusion that these tools are ineffective. The truth is, it is important to **invest in digital organising**, because that leads to more members who are able to put in more resources that can then turn into better communications which will result in more members, which leads to better communications and on and on.

**Convincing leadership that this is important is crucial.** Trade unionists have shared experiences of finding it difficult to show the value of these tools for different generations of workers. However, it is simple to explain that the tools do not replace existing efforts, rather it enhances them. The hardest part, as explained by union activists, has been convincing leadership to continue despite digital actions not taking off right away. The most successful digital campaigns can take years of organising and planning before ever bearing fruit.

### Solution 2: Get creative

When you are low on resources, you need to be creative in maximising the impact of a campaign. This means generating content from those on the ground and **telling a good story**. A good story

comes from examples of real people and how they have been affected by certain policies and, importantly, their stories of resistance.

When telling a story without a lot of human resources you can automate your communications by scheduling when they will be sent. It is like meal planning, get all your ingredients together and then plan out your week so you are not always struggling to post things in time.

*Lithuanian colleagues share a story of not having a lot of resources in their campaign to raise pay and fight corruption. Activists created simple slogans and graphics based on campaigns in North America and Italy. Images of a black swan with the words "work to rule" were sent digitally and printed physically so that workers who were taking part in the campaign felt they were included. Activists bought mirrors and placed them outside politicians' workplaces to show politicians that they were the problem holding up progress. Ministers had to step down as the protests ramped up. This was a creative action that did not cost a lot of money but turned out to be very effective.*

### Solution 3: Be strategic and set a clear goal

Now that you have made your campaigning and communications a priority and you have taken stock of the resources that you have (or do not have), it is time to be strategic and work within your means to create a successful campaign.

This starts with **setting a clear goal**. Often "awareness raising" is given as a goal to digital teams, or to "go viral". These are not goals! The difference between a vague hope and a digital goal, is about focusing on what digital tools can actually achieve in and of themselves, specific and measurable, and then finding the tactics to do that.

This goal must be achievable in real world conditions and has to be specific. There is no sense in trying to fight for "change", "better", or "mobilise workers" because these ideas are too abstract. You could try: "increase social media following by 20%", "ensure five amendments are included in new legislation", "mobilise 2,500 workers for a demonstration".

Make a conscious decision to hire communicators and to choose the right channels that you can communicate with. It is impossible to do everything, so find out where your members are and then reach out to them. Do not create a TikTok or send email newsletters if these are not deemed effective.

#### **Solution 4: Make alliances**

The best campaigns do not come from working in one office building. The key is to share leadership. Leaders from other affiliates, workplaces, or even allies can be empowered to help share and lead messaging on your campaign.

*An example: A European citizen's initiative that pushed the Right2Water campaign aimed to ensure that the right to water and sanitation was enshrined in Member States of the European Union. This was the first ever European initiative to gain one million signatures and it can be said that it is because it was done with allies. It was supported by the Austrian and German trade union federations as well as the sectoral federation EPSU but also 120 different NGOs.*

*We can also learn from the example of the Fight for 15 campaign that was led by American Unions. This campaign started as an attempt to raise wages to a decent level in fast food restaurants. The campaign was interesting as it was not claimed by any one trade union which made sharing leadership with civil society and political parties possible. The movement spiralled to dazzling success where there were protests in places like the United Kingdom, Japan and Brazil. Insisting on owning the branding of a campaign is usually not the most effective way for it to grow.*

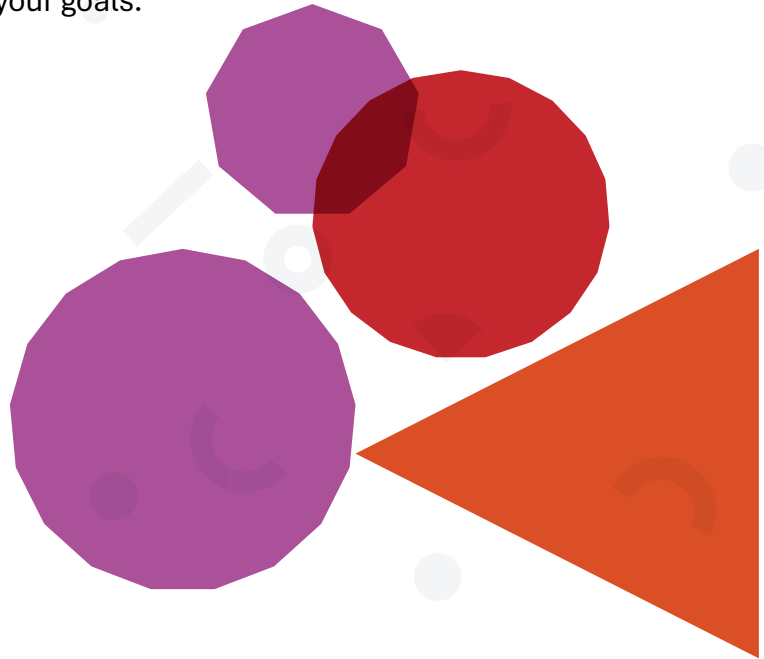
Every campaign should be easy to join. There must be tools that leaders and activists can use to share your material.

Consider creating:

- Talking points
- Stock posts for social media
- Shareable graphics
- Petitions
- Infographics

- And contact information for anyone to get involved.

Identify the opposition. Just like for your campaign goals, you need to be specific. Who is your opposition here in this campaign: Is it local management? Is it far-right political forces? The European Council? This group is the one you either need to convince or to get out of the way for you to achieve your goals.



#### **Solution 5: Adapt for success**

The final part of building a successful campaign is to adapt from lessons learned. Sometimes campaigns and the use of digital tools are more successful than even you expected, but that is a rare case. Oftentimes, when you launch a shiny new digital tool, it does not reach the numbers that you had imagined in your head. Successful change takes time. Giving up too soon is a mistake, **you need to adapt**, not stop. Successful change takes time.

*The ETUC is a good example of adapting to new realities. With its new petitioning tool, workers and supporters were able to engage digitally with European issues, sometimes for the first time. Numbers in the database went up but there were still some wrinkles to smooth out to get the most out of this new tool. There have since been discussions to add different mailing and social media services to the tool in order to help deal with certain deficiencies and become more effective in the long run.*





# **Challenge 2: KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS**

## Challenge 2: Keeping up with technological advancements

Rapid and continuous changes in communication methods – it's hard to keep up with ever-evolving communication trends, tools can become outdated by the time they are developed. But that does not mean the challenges cannot be overcome. Some of us have pre-existing skills in digital tools and others are totally new to it. It isn't necessarily generational, although that can play a part, the key is to adapt and learn new technology that can assist in your work.

### Solution 1: Training and education

If you have leadership or staff that are of a generation when many of these digital tools were not used, then the best way to get people up to speed is through training and development. There can be resistance from leadership who will not be using the tools in their day-to-day work, however providing education about the importance of digital tools can be the difference between getting buy-in versus deciding to forego digitalisation.

The ETUC has worked in collaboration with ETUI Education to provide training on digital tools for communications and organising. These trainings showcase best practices of unions that have had success with digital tools and even stories of where things did not work very well. Tools are nice to have, but they aren't very effective if you don't know how to use them. To sign up for these trainings, contact colleagues at ETUI Education [here](#).

### Solution 2: Choose tools that make a difference

Adapt your strategies to the national context: first you should figure out which platforms are popular in your country, and which target group you want to reach. A good way of finding out who uses which networks in your country would be from news reports or even European public databases like Eurostat. You can find some reports on social media use in the EU [here](#).

Here are some examples of tools:

### Websites

Your organisation's website is a vital part of your online presence. It should contain essential information about your organisation's history, structure, your mission, your activities, and contact details.

- Keep the design clear and intuitive to make it easy for visitors to find what they're looking for
- Make your website visually appealing by incorporating high-quality images, a clean layout, respecting the graphic charter of your organisation, etc.
- Make sure that the website is mobile-friendly: this adapts the layout and functionality of the website to various screen sizes and provides a seamless experience no matter which device you use
- Ensure that your website is accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. This is important for inclusivity. This includes implementing features like alt text for images, keyboard navigation, and ensuring compatibility with screen readers.
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO): Optimising the website's content and structure for search engines improves its visibility and ranking in search results. This involves using relevant keywords, meta tags, and descriptive URLs, as well as regularly updating content to keep it fresh and relevant.
- Incorporate analytic software like Matomo to track website traffic, user behaviour, and engagement metrics. This data can inform decision-making, identify areas for improvement, and measure the effectiveness of your content
- Make sure to define a clear goal for your website frontpage: Is it to attract new members? To provide key information for your existing members? To share your activities? Everything that doesn't fall into your goal should go into a different part of your website.
- CRM: A Contact Relations Management system is a database that can also send messages through email, or sometimes through WhatsApp and phone calls. A simple database is better than no database but what makes a CRM so useful is the ability to target specific people in specific places. This way you can see which supporters are the most active and give them the possibility to share your messaging.

- Make sure to have a clear purpose. Some unions have shared stories that investing into a CRM was nothing more than an expensive mistake. Why would you pay for something each month if you had no use for micro-targeting or specific personalised communication? This is not to talk CRMs down, but it is to remind us of the importance of always choosing our goals before we choose the tools.
- Don't forget your join-a-union button!

*A comprehensive example of a communication website comes from Italian colleagues at Collettiva. The website deals with anything concerning work, rights, economics, environment, social issues, welfare, culture, and international issues. [www.collettiva.it](http://www.collettiva.it) offers all the news to keep people informed and updated on the issues dear to the CGIL, its members and civil society. The website includes a multimedia platform to showcase transformations and struggles, disputes and denunciations, but also victories and good practices, ideas and proposals, values and possible utopias. The goal is to put videos, podcasts, news reports, stories, columns, live broadcasts, social networks, and in-depth analyses to put the entire labour movement back at the centre where it deserves to be.*

*With the help of CoopTech Hub (Polish cooperative technology centre), colleagues from OPZZ created a chatbot for their website to answer specific questions about working conditions for the public. Nadzieja, the chatbot, will try to answer the questions or link to relevant information including advising the questioner to join a union. It has helped 150.000 users in the first 6 months post launch.*

## **Social media**

Social media is extremely important for general visibility and to send your message out to members and decision makers. It is difficult – perhaps not impossible – but very difficult to do a modern advocacy campaign without any social media presence.

On a quick note, it is important to mention that each social media is good for targeting certain audiences and is better in certain contexts. Some countries have many people on Facebook and other social media platforms like TikTok lean toward the younger generation. It is always important to pick your target and solidify your goals before deciding on which social media campaign to use.

Just as a general example, using Twitter (X) to speak directly to workers on the shopfloor might not be the best in your context. A professional looking video might not fit on TikTok but be very acceptable on LinkedIn and it goes on and on. Always define your goals and adapt your messaging.

*For instance, when contacting migrant workers using WhatsApp groups might prove very effective which was the case with Italian colleagues from CGIL. CGIL-FLAI monitored TikTok and Facebook (in English, Italian, and Punjabi) to understand the conditions of migrant workers on the ground so that they could invite them to WhatsApp groups dedicated to fixing their specific issues.*

*Another example is when organiser colleagues at UNI-SEEEOC used Facebook groups to directly reach out to members in companies that would benefit from changes to their workplace. They found data directly on the site and invited workers to speak about their issues.*

## **Apps**

Apps can be hit or miss as some trade unions saw them as expensive wastes that were difficult to produce and still not used by their members. However, there have been successes as well such as:

*The CGIL membership platform – Digita App allows members to easily find out union initiatives as well as simply fill out forms for unemployment and other social benefits from the Italian welfare system. This includes maternity allowances, educational services for children, etc.*



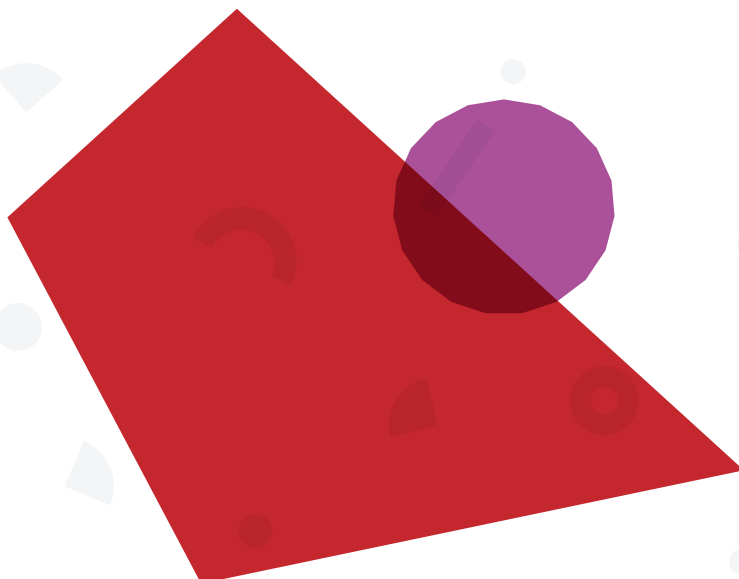
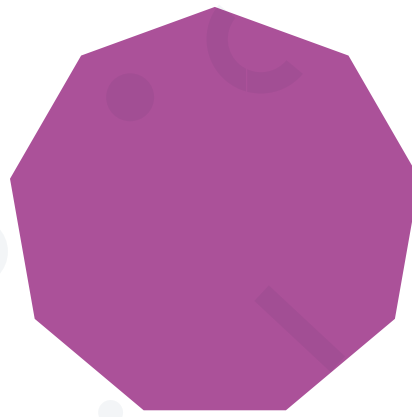
***With the help of CoopTech Hub, Polish colleagues from OPZZ have launched an app to improve trade union management, where members can communicate, vote, pay fees, assign tasks, and create events. It assembles 150 union communities across all industries federated in OPZZ.***

### ***Newsletters and targeted emails***

Newsletters can still be a very good way to convert supporters into clicking on and supporting your campaigns.

- Make sure people get the information that they're interested in (for example, you can include hashtags linked to issues that they can subscribe to)
- Targeted emails are still one of the best ways to reach out to members in lieu of more impersonal social media apps like Facebook or Twitter (X)
- Be careful of bulk emails going to spam if they are not sent from a real person, one of the ways to get around spam filters is to use a tag from your database to automatically fill-in someone's first name in the message.

***Italian colleagues organised a successful targeted email campaign and managed to create a "perfect storm" by blocking policy makers' inboxes (sometimes it can help your goals to get on peoples' nerves) and at the same time creating a feedback loop by sharing their actions on social media and getting their supporters involved through WhatsApp groups.***





# **Challenge 3: USING DATA TO MAKE DECISIONS**

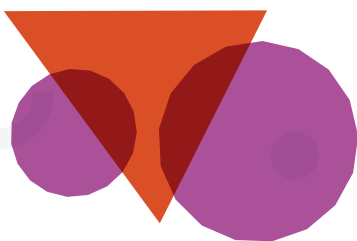
### Challenge 3: Using data to make decisions

Every trade union has data, they have membership data, financial data, and even have access to public data. Knowing what to do with that data is a different story. This section outlines ways to use the information you already have and data you need to collect in order to make evidence-based decisions for your actions. Knowledge is power, but only if you use it correctly.

#### Solution 1: Get hold of the data on your membership

You want to recruit more members? But you don't even know which workers are already organised, who they are, where they work?

Ensure that your trade union organisation has an up-to-date database of its membership. The personal membership data should be segregated by: age, gender, labour market sector and other important information. This not only provides a clear profile of the workers who are members of the trade union but also provides trends on the labour market and where the main potentials and emerging sectors are for organising new members. This is essential in tailoring campaigns targeted at new members.



#### Solution 2: Chose the right tools to collect data

Collecting data is important but not every piece of data is relevant or useful. Unions need to know specifically what data they will need in order to achieve their goals. To help you decide, ask yourself some questions: What data are you missing that would be really useful to know? If you knew this information, how would it change your strategy? If you do not have an answer, then it is not yet the time to start collecting data. The first step is always knowing why the information is needed.

Now that you know why you want to collect data, then it is time to choose how you are going to get the data. All you need to do is ask questions!

#### Surveys and questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are an easy way to collect feedback on your initiatives and policies; they are also a great way to reach out to your members and supporters and show them that you care about what they want and need from you.

*Belgian colleagues in the FGTB regularly do surveys among their members to ask them about their working conditions, difficulties, and expectations. They then use that data to push for campaigns that are relevant to the needs of their members.*

*Irish colleagues were unsure how to structure their recruitment campaign. They wondered how many workers would be interested in establishing a local union in their workplace versus the amount of workers who would be opposed to it. The best way to find out... was to ask. They sent out a survey and found that 46% of respondents were positively inclined to workplace unions while only 16% were opposed. This finding formed the basis of the structure of their campaign.*

#### Petitions

As far as we can tell, petitions are one of the oldest forms of solidarity used to change our conditions. History shows that enslaved workers building the pyramids in Egypt petitioned their overlords for better working conditions. Today, petitions are still relevant as they are an easy way to gather useful data by rallying supporters around a common cause.

There are misconceptions that petitions are no longer useful but it is clear that they do two main things: Either tell decision makers to do something and/or to gather data about supporters and invite them for further actions.



Here some tips for creating successful petitions:

**Set an achievable goal: Have a win possible in real world conditions**

How to write a petition that achieves its goals? The first and most obvious solution is to define a goal that can actually be won in the real world. A petition to “end capitalism”, “end world hunger”, “build a workers’ utopia” might all seem like things that we want but there is no way a petition with enough signatures would ever provide enough food for everyone. Try a petition like: “let Ryanair workers drink water on the job”, or “tell your MEP to vote against new austerity measures”.

**Direct the demand: Target the decision makers that matter**

Remember that a petition is a noun, but it is also a verb. Many petition creators make the mistake of properly targeting the demand. You need to petition someone, but who? You should not just petition “the government” or “the United Nations” or even “the union”. Target an individual or individuals who have the power to make the change that you want. That way, you can deliver the petition to these specific decision makers and influence their minds and actions.

**Croatian colleagues at SSSH recently started their journey with building their own petitions platform. This platform has the ability to add your own issues so that they can be targeted to the right people in the national context. Find out more [here](#)**

**Keep it short and clear: Your demands should not be buried in walls of text**

We should be careful not to fall into this bad habit – the habit where we try to explain every possible point in the petition text. The petition should be short, concise and clear. You are not writing a policy document, you are writing a demand. Put a little context at the beginning so that everyone understands why this particular issue is a problem and then go directly into the demand.

**PODKREPA were able to collect more than 100.000 signatures supporting energy and mine workers with some clear demands:**

- **Ensure sufficient time and provide for a smooth transition**
- **Analyse the opportunities for energy independence**
- **Ensure workers’ participation, well-paid jobs, better working conditions and a clear plan for the Maritsa East complex**

Keep in mind that there is nothing wrong with placing a link at the bottom to direct supporters to “find out more” where they can read all your background policy documents for those that really want to understand the issue in depth.

**Raise emotion: Anger and indignation are calls for people to act against injustice**

Anger is one of our natural responses to injustice, there is nothing wrong with clearly laying out why we should be angry about a certain issue. Emotion helps improve engagement with your campaign so do not be afraid to write something stirring and evocative. When European austerity rules would force governments to cut from the healthcare of your parents or the education of your children all the while that CEO salaries are on the rise, you have every right to let activists know that this has to be stopped.

**Follow up: Keep your supporters engaged**

After your petition is out, make sure to maintain the momentum and to foster a sense of community among those who signed it. Here some tips on how to keep people motivated and involved in your campaign:

- **Welcome new supporters:** Make it clear that they are now part of your activist group
- **Add key statistics:** Show what you have been able to accomplish as an organisation
- **Offer clear next steps:** Send messages with instructions about how to get involved
- **Show victories and updates:** Each step of the campaign should be highlighted to the supporters
- **Add others’ logo and share the plan with their mailing lists**
- **Ask your supporters to help you to collect more signatures.** They are already convinced, and if

you engage them, with crowd-sourcing you can achieve a multiplying effect, so don't be shy and ask them to talk to and share the petition with their friends, family members, co-workers, etc.

*Examples of keeping supporters included come from a recent ETUC campaign. The Paris and Brussels demonstrations against austerity used petitions to gain supporters and engage membership. When the ETUC marched in the streets, supporters who signed petitions received updates in the lead up, and on the day. Each demonstration was followed by a 10% increase in the contact database. The lesson from this is simple, when trade unions do concrete actions, people become interested.*

### **Publicly available data**

Sometimes important data is hidden just under our noses. Whether it is the Eurobarometer at European level or financial statistics from your national ministries, there is data available to use to our advantage.

*Lithuanian colleagues found that some of their most useful research for a campaign was already done for them and publicly available. Education unions took ministry data to use for collective bargaining and in their demands for changing labour policy. The ETUC uses sites like Eurofound, Eurostat and tracks the Eurobarometer to get a sense of what Europeans as a whole are thinking and feeling so that we can campaign on issues that working people need.*

### **Solution 3: Manage your database**

Data is not good forever. It needs to constantly be refreshed and updated, otherwise it could turn out to be useless when you really need to get information or to mobilise quickly. A major reason for keeping data up to date is the legal responsibility to do so but also, high quality and relevant data leads to the best decisions on where to take the union next.

P & B Agentur communication agency reminded colleagues at an ETUC digital trade unionism seminar that keeping your contact list healthy and up to date is crucial to ensuring that your messages

reach the right audience and to avoid negatively impacting your spam scores:

- Regularly review your database to identify inactive subscribers who haven't engaged with your content for an extended period. Look at who's really active, maybe let those go who haven't clicked on anything for years because it is bad for your spam count!
- Instead of immediately removing inactive subscribers, you can also explore strategies to reactivate them (for example through targeted re-engagement messages).

*As an example, British colleagues in the education sector had a lot of contact information for members but had not always updated it in a way that kept it fresh. When a scandal happened in schools, they realised that mobilising their membership was very difficult because many emails and phone numbers were out of date. They chose to learn from this experience and invested a lot of time to update all of their data so that they could launch an anti-racism campaign which in the end turned out to be very successful because of member engagement.*

*Another example from Dutch colleagues comes from their data updating habits. They always update contact information when someone passes away so that all data is kept fresh which means that they avoid embarrassing emails to deceased members.*

### **Solution 4: Use your data**

The final step is almost obvious. You have collected your data, built your database and now it is time to use that data. This should be the moment that you campaign to gain members, keep members and push for changes that improve the lives of workers.

*Unions 21 have shared tips and techniques for improving the use of data and have kindly shared a report that is a resource for officials and activists who want to improve their understanding about data, and a tool for strong data advocates in unions to use as they encourage and make the case for greater data use. You can read their policy paper here: <https://unions21.org/ideas/using-data-to-build-strong-unions>*



The background features a futuristic cityscape with tall buildings and a sunset sky in shades of orange and red. A large, stylized blue arrow graphic points from the left towards the right, with various geometric shapes like circles and lines scattered around it.

# Challenge 4: DATA AND GDPR

## Challenge 4: Data and GDPR

The European Union adopted the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018 with fines for failure to comply that can reach up to 20 million Euros. Not only is data protection a fundamental right in the EU Charter, having good data protection builds trust, and saves time and money. When deciding to collect data, and in order to follow the regulation properly, it can be very helpful to get legal expertise in ensuring that member data is safe and secure.

*As an example, the ETUC worked with a legal team and a data protection officer to implement safeguards for handling collected data. A Data Protection Implementation Agreement (DPIA) and a Data Protection Agreement (DPA) was signed with any company or online tool that it worked with in order to ensure the highest level of data protection.*

### Solution 1: Collect only the data that is directly relevant and required

GDPR is the legal basis to ensure that only necessary and proportional data is collected as is outlined in Article 80. This just means that you must:

- Describe the measures that are used to collect data;
- Define your objectives;
- And choose the option that is the least intrusive but most effective.

If you really think about it, GDPR is just the legal basis for following good data practices. This works for campaigns, tackling the far-right in the online sphere and in organising efforts.

An organising database should store and process meaningful information about:

- Members – job status, vulnerability, level of activity in the union, etc.
- Potential members and activists
- Individual workers' relationship with the union
- Identification of organic leaders/workers with influence
- Identification of workplace issues
- Charting activities / “structure tests”
- Member retention and activation/ mobilisation

### Solution 2: Have a clear data protection policy and appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO)

It is very important that you let people know how their data is used and how you will treat it. As colleagues from the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) remind us, data must be:

- Processed lawfully and in a transparent manner
- Collected for explicit and legitimate purposes
- Limited to what is necessary
- Accurate and kept up to date
- Retained only for the time needed
- Processed in a secure manner
- Supported by the principle of accountability

This is just a short overview of obligations but ensuring that you are following all of the rules requires an expert in data and the rules around GDPR.

*As an example, the ETUC hired legal advice and a data protection officer when setting up their action-europe platform. This was useful for fulfilling article 35 of GDPR which is to create a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for high-risk processing of data. As the ETUC was using a new technology for the first time, it was key to get it right so that supporters who signed petitions understood what would happen with their data and also that their data would be protected from breaches or unlawful use.*

### Solution 3: Respon to users' privacy rights

It is natural that everyone wants to know what is happening to their data. Your duty is to proactively respond to data handling requests. Keep in mind that:

- Each person is in control of her/his data.
- Everyone can choose to share data or stop sharing it at any moment.
- Do not share people's data without their consent.

The key principles here are consent and legitimate use. This makes sense above and beyond a legal point of view. You want to collect data to use for campaigns, to mobilise, to recruit, etc. so it is natural that you want engaged people who consent to working with you.

#### **Solution 4: Be specific, not all workplaces/ unions are the same**

Although GDPR is more or less the same in every current/ former EU Member State, the way data protection is actually regulated can vary. There are also big differences in laws and regulations that apply to unions, and the way employers behave in different types of workplaces. You can collect data under GDPR – but you need to be careful about certain things, like:

- What your union's data policy says
- Your purposes in giving union members access to the data
- How you store your data
- How you get consent from workers who are not (yet) union members to keep their data in the database

For more information on how unions can make the best use of EU data protection rules to protect workers' private data, check out [industriAll Europe's GDPR Toolbox for Trade Unionists](#).

#### **Solution 5: Use GDPR to protect workers**

Employers are collecting more and more data on workers to use it for algorithmic management to control their lives and working conditions. The ETUI reminds us that there are ways to use GDPR that specifically protect workers, just a few examples:

- Employers cannot use key-logging and mouse movement detection software to ensure that employees are online, as that is disproportionate.
- Employers cannot use access control to buildings to evaluate a worker's performance.
- Employers cannot use video analytics to be alerted if someone stops moving on an assembly line.

To find out more, please refer to this paper: [Pfleife \(2017\) <https://iapp.org/news/a/wp29-releases-ex->](#)





# Challenge 5: ATTRACTING AND RETAINING MEMBERS

## Challenge 5: Attracting and retaining members

It's a refrain at this point. Unions are losing members, people do not join political parties, community organisations are hollowed out and led by activists at the top. As the world around us becomes more individualistic and people are less likely to join communities, bosses take advantage of this by dividing workers further to build a climate that is comfortable for capital. Unions can show that there is power in organising and that we can change our workplaces and society for the better.

### Solution 1: Use digital tools to reach out to potential new members

So, you created some engaging content. First of all, you need to make a choice of where to put that engaging content. If you want to reach out to workers in new forms of employment, is it LinkedIn? Probably not. If you want to engage the youth, is it TikTok? Maybe. There is no sense in screaming into the void. You need to go where the people are. And while the face-to-face approach is still the best way to recruit new members, digital tools can help you to amplify your messages quicker and to a broader public.

Partnering with relevant entities can help get your message out. Women's groups, youth forums, migrant networks can work together with trade unions to pass messages of solidarity and campaigns for better conditions.

Monitor engagement with GDPR-compliant analytic tools like Matomo and other analytics built into social media applications to see if your message and campaign is having the effect you want. If you are looking to reach out to workers in non-standard forms of employment, or women, or young people then the answer is to use the tools that they use.

*For instance, Italian colleagues used WhatsApp to organise migrant workers around common themes of better conditions, better pay and a decent life for all.*

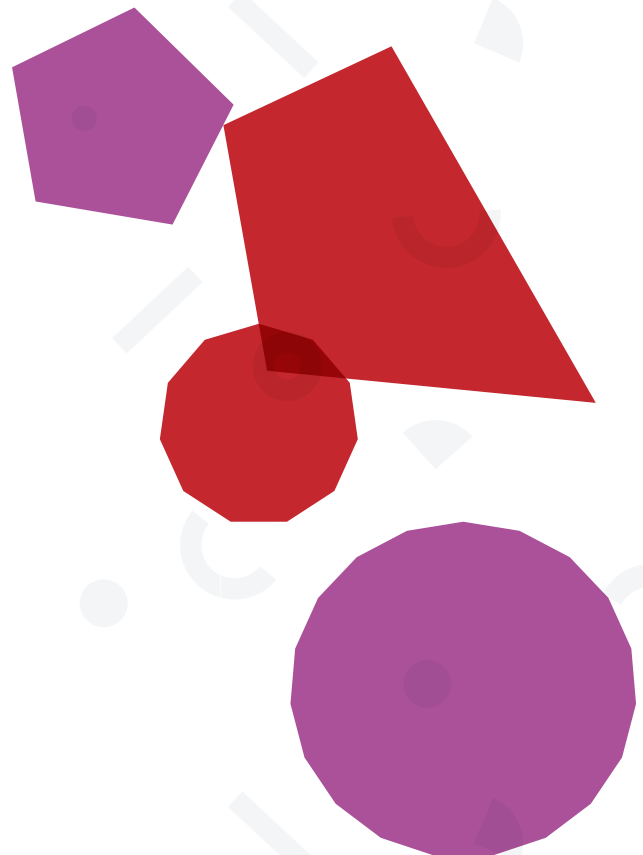
### Solution 2: Get to know your audience

Different platforms require different communication styles. If you don't know the best way to reach out to certain audiences, the easiest and most effective way is to ask them.

*Spanish colleagues at USO selected the youngest members from their database and brought them together in their office in Madrid. They then interviewed them to define their needs, expectations, and the language to use, as well as collected their feedback on previous social media campaigns.*

*Based on this they started a completely new social media campaign, starting with more traditional channels (LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter) and then jumping to newer platforms like Instagram and TikTok. With great success: one video on TikTok was seen by 12 million people!*

Also, there is a lot more information on the topic of reaching out to young people, [check out our guide on how to engage young people in the work of trade unions.](#)



### **Solution 3: Retain your members**

Someone has decided to join the union. This is fantastic news. However, a major problem arises when others decide to leave at the same time. Unions defend workers by creating collective force, so we want more members overall, not just to gain a new one and lose another. We need to fill in the bathtub but also plug the drain at the same time.

*One method to retain this person is to send an email to them, however Danish and Norwegian colleagues found that the member was five times more likely to stay if they were contacted by phone. Although the phone may not be the most digital solution on earth, it goes back to the importance of having a clean database with clear information. This is not to mention that there are digital calling applications which can help facilitate reaching out to a vast number of contacts.*

Gathering data is crucial to staying effective. The database should be filled with the reasons why each member felt the need to leave the union. We cannot improve if we do not base our actions on real information shared with us by members.

### **Solution 4: Join a union function**

Make it easy to join a union! Are you still using paper signatures at your organisation? Sometimes that can work, after all paper signatures are better than having absolutely no way to sign up new members. But why not make it easier? Have a link on your website that you can share digitally with QR codes, or on social media so that workers can directly join the proper union and get in contact with someone to guide their journey from member to activist.

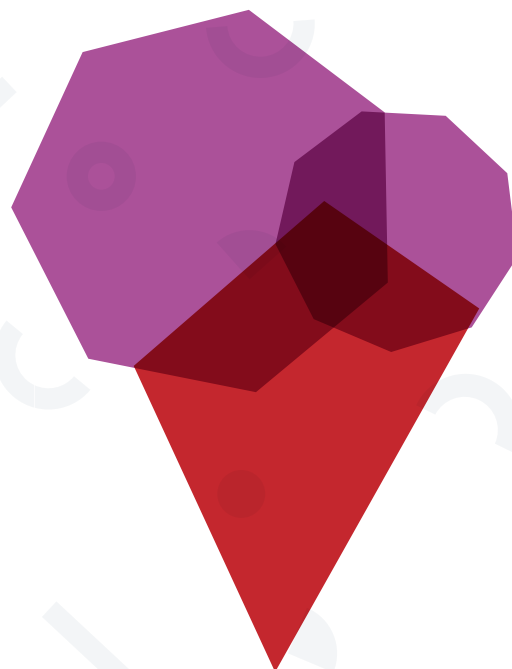
Always keep in mind that the more steps that you ask a supporter to go through, the less likely they are to complete the process. Have the adherence form front and centre and make sure that their data inputs are immediately entered into a database to be taken care of by membership teams.

*The ETUC has a “join a union” function that is used when communicating through social media to make it easy for any member across Europe to find a labour union to contact. The centralised database of all affiliates means that any European worker can find their place. Having an easy link to join a union allows for each ETUC message and campaign to include a clear way engage supporters and turn them into union members.*

Tips for your join a union button:

- Make the button prominent on your website: It should be in a banner or highly visible
- Simplify the process: Remove steps by going straight to the adherence form
- Divide by sector or type of job: A small questionnaire that directs people to the appropriate union
- Add the button to mailings for supporters: When mailing supporters of campaigns, add the button as a call to action

**JOIN A  
UNION**





# Challenge 6: ONLINE CAMPAIGNING

## Challenge 6: Online campaigning

Unions have been doing campaigns since workers have been organised. Whether they are campaigns for better pay or to stop harassment at the workplace or to win political objectives, unions have found creative ways to create change. Online campaigning is not different philosophically, the desire to mobilise for change is the same, but with new tools to help augment the effectiveness.

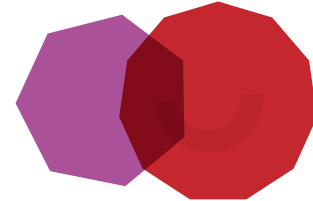
### Solution 1: Define clear goals

Each campaign starts with a goal. “What do I want to achieve?” should be your first question and you should not start until you have an answer. Sometimes you want to run an education campaign, sometimes you want something slightly more concrete. However, each goal should be quantified in some way. If you want a campaign on protecting workers, then you could aim for more engagement on social media, more interventions by political representatives in the legislature, an amount of collective agreements signed, etc. Quantify your goals so you can clearly identify when you have reached your targets, or if you have not, re-evaluate what can be done better.

*Irish colleagues in the Fórsa trade union were engaged in an impending strike by community workers. The industrial relations goal was to get the right deal for workers; the campaigning goal was to build pressure on the government bodies that were opposing the deal. To support that, the digital goal was to reach a level of online activism that showed just how much support there was for the workers, and to force the government to see that. The tactic to achieve that goal was a social media campaign that tagged the relevant government ministers, using their membership lists to get cross-union support. It was also about giving clear messaging to supporters for them to use, and to create content that aimed to get high engagement alongside the more traditional updates about the industrial action.*

*The outcome was hundreds of messages online targeting the specific politicians that were responsible for the industrial relations issue. It*

*also saw the language used in online messaging being used by opposition parties and general supporters. This added to the media and political pressure, alongside the work being done by the industrial relations team. The government was coming under huge pressure to resolve it. The night before the strikes, a pay increase was offered, and the strike averted.*



### Solution 2: Tune in with your audience and understand how you can reach them

When you have a clear goal, it is time to target your audience. Who is your audience? What do you want them to know? You do not need any advanced strategies, you just need to know that you are speaking to real people and want to engage with them where they are.

One of the most successful ways to engage people is to use humour and interact with them as human beings who want to hear engaging and relatable content that is more than just a press release. Many trade union posts come off as very polished and therefore out of touch, so you must adapt your message to the platform you are using. People do not only want to hear negative tones, they also need to hear messages of hope.

Most importantly, no matter how profound, important, and ethically grounded your message may be, if it fails to reach and resonate with its intended audience, its impact remains zero.

The worst thing you can do as a union is to assume that you have all the answers. That is why once you have collected data, and it is telling you something different than what you had assumed would be the answer... then it is time to adapt. **Adapting to new information is the key** to creating an efficient and effective strategy for change. Wasting time and money on issues that are not needed is a surefire way to lose a campaign.



*As an example, Irish trade unions contracted a company to perform surveys of its membership in order to develop the right communication for its public awareness campaign for collective bargaining. The research showed surprising results, as the awareness of collective bargaining was already very high and the union decided that it would be a waste of money and time to work on a campaign that was not needed. The union then modified their campaign to focus on recruitment and organising, as that was deemed the best use of resources based on the surveys received.*

### **Solution 3: Building a successful campaign from start to finish**

You now have your goal and your target audience, so what's next? It's time to plan and execute your campaign.

For many trade unions, there are two types of campaign paradigms that are not mutually exclusive. There is inside access and outside power. Inside access is when you have the ear of decision makers or institutions and can lobby or influence from within power structures. Outside power is when you push outside at the barriers to progress until they smash. Both campaigns create change, and the strategies need to be chosen carefully.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- How long will this campaign last? Campaigns cannot run in perpetuity and still be effective, you don't want to find yourself in a trap of "raising awareness" for 17 years. A proper campaign should be time-limited and goal-oriented.
- Map the stakeholders that will help you in your campaign, from those who may be interested, to those who will remain relatively neutral to those who will try to block your campaign.
- Develop your message and tone and keep that consistent with your communications strategy and graphic charter.
- Choose the tools you will use for this campaign; they should be both digital and physical but need to stay targeted and coherent. Will you do most of your work over WhatsApp? Will you use petitions? The choice is yours.

- Measure results at different points through digital analytics to see to what extent your campaign is being followed and shared. If you are disappointed, try to modify your content based on your posts and actions with the most interactions.
- When the campaign is finished, always perform an evaluation so that the next campaign is better and builds upon success and corrects mistakes. The work you do here will make you more effective as time goes on.

On a final note with campaigns, it is important not to give up too easily. When new tools are tried, sometimes leadership has expectations that are unrealistic. When the tool inevitably does not deliver right away, sometimes the tool is scrapped, or focus is placed elsewhere. It is important to learn from mistakes, and also remember that the most successful campaigns often have years of build up with creating coalitions, capacities, and actions.

### **Solution 4: Activating membership with online campaigning**

Online campaigning allows trade unions to reach so many more people than if they just focus on boots on the ground. However, there is a phenomenon of 'clicktivism' where people support a campaign but do not do anything else to effect change. Liking a Facebook page is a good indicator of support, but trade unions want to mobilise their membership so that everyone feels like the union is their union and they are fighting together.

If you have petitions or surveys sent out to members and supporters, you can then invite them to different discussion groups or to events.

*As an example, the ETUC put forward a petition against European fiscal rules that would bring back austerity across Europe. Every person that signed the petition received updates about demonstrations in Paris and Brussels along with a live feed on the day. Workers were invited to march alongside trade unions to stop austerity from returning.*



# **Challenge 7: TACKLING THE FAR-RIGHT IN THE ONLINE SPHERE**

## Challenge 7: Tackling the Far-Right in the online sphere

### Solution 1: Identify Far-Right tactics

The first step is knowing your enemy. The far-right is not a unitary movement that should be dismissed as uneducated, silly, or benign.

The far-right uses a front stage/ back stage strategy where their social media posts and most of their public declarations are done in a way to hide their radicality. Humour is also their speciality as they can say terrible things but then hide behind the claim that they were “just joking”. Jokes work extremely well online, but they also help normalise far-right actors as they begin to look harmless when everything they say is done in the form of jokes.

The far-right is unfortunately not just sending jokes and memes, they are also organising into online groups like on Telegram, Facebook, WhatsApp or even in alt-tech platforms. These groups have led to online troll attacks or to organising violent assaults on fundamental democratic values as has been seen from Brazil to the United States.

*Irish colleagues have shared learnings from working with allies to build an online approach to messaging against the far-right.*

- *You're not debating logic with logic; you're up against emotional rhetoric that aims to cause fear or anger, etc.*
- *The far-right don't have to convince anyone with facts, they only have to confuse enough people to create a vacuum for doubt or unconscious bias to creep in.*
- *If you only ever say why the other side is wrong, you're always debating on their terms and repeating their arguments for them. Say what you stand for.*
- *Be quick and reactive if you want to own the narrative.*

*An example of identifying the far-right tactics has been created by an ambitious mapping created by Italian colleagues. Trade union premises, along with online websites and platforms, have been attacked several times by far-right reactionary forces and after the unprecedented attack to CGIL headquarters on October 9th 2021, they decided to monitor all the actions against the trade union sites, by collecting them on the “Map of anti-union vandalism”, edited by Anna Chiara Manzo from the Fondazione Di Vittorio.*

*This [Map](#) shows the geographical distribution of the attacks, with pictures and links to the news on the event, the claim of the attack, the responsible group, the reaction by the local trade union and communities and is a precious tool to better understand the links, similarities, differences, strategies of the many different groups threatening trade union work, and to support coherent responses.*

### Solution 2: Push for legislation

Social media companies are not there solely to facilitate human interactions and connection, they are there to make profit. Hate and anger build a lot of engagement, and engagement brings money.

If you look at studies from New York University, it is easy to see that the algorithms favour far-right content more than any other political ideology. Also, disinformation and misinformation are widespread on social media, but particularly far-right disinformation is the most interacted with online.

These companies act like public utilities where everyone needs to be in order to live a connected life, but as long as they work on European soil, they have to play by our rules.

*The ETUC has a policy to regulate social media companies so that hateful and harmful speech is not boosted by algorithms to earn profit for social media shareholders. Engagement online should not be geared toward the most extreme content including misinformation and disinformation. Political advertising should be transparent and clearly labelled to see where the information is coming from.*

### **Solution 3: Engage membership**

Trade unions are not here just to play defence, we are the polar opposite of the far-right. Not only because of trade unions' history and proud tradition of opposing the far-right in the past, but because of what trade unions stand for today. Trade unions, above all else, believe in solidarity: we seek better lives, social justice and opportunity, for all working people. We stand for unity over division.

There is no silver bullet or one-size-fits-all “cut and paste” solution to tackling the far-right. Trade unions are stronger together and will win with solidarity and by learning from each other.

A common feature that is shared everywhere is that the growth of the far-right takes place in a political-economic context where occupational and economic security as well as income have declined.

That is why it is important to get our message of economic and social progress out to as many people as possible. Trade union policies are a direct antidote to the poisoned fertile soil that allows the far-right to propagate.

The best way to get our message out is by organising online with our message of an economic alternative. This is why it is so important to build lists of supporters who sign petitions or other actions for trade union campaigns so that they can hear and share a trade union vision where no one is left behind.

*Irish colleagues have examples of fighting the far-right as they faced hateful protests against asylum seekers and library books in recent years. The Fórsa trade union put out statements on social media and their website with a focus on what they stood for and countered the far-right narratives by appealing to the strong sense of justice in Irish society. The language that resonated was:*

- *“Intimidating people will do nothing except scare vulnerable people and rip our communities apart”,*
- *“Racism has no place in Irish society”,*
- *“Trade unions are for everyone”.*

*When it came to representing librarians against far-right agitators, the union used strong digital communications in support of offline work (rallies, industrial relations, large online meetings for members to create spaces for them, and other work). The focus here was to not debate on the far-right's terms. They did not engage with far-right arguments against the LGBTQ+ books; the union predominately ignored them and focused the calls on the employers to protect the workers from the agitators abusing people in their workplaces.*

*Overall, the engagement with their digital content was high and positive in nature, and they became a target online by the far-right. Their online work was mirrored in their very prominent attendance at pro-refugee rallies, which vastly outnumbered the opposing groups.*

### **Solution 4: Distribute power**

It is crucial to share your message with supporters, however, supporters need to feel an ownership of the policies for themselves. Material cannot go viral if just shared from one central trade union account, you need many to amplify the message to ensure that more eyes have access to it. You should always make it as easy as possible to share all of your messages, petitions and campaigns.

Leaders on the ground, whether they be trade union members or supporters, can use the central messaging and adapt it to their conditions to cast a wider net and involve more allies in the fight for better economic and social conditions for everyone.

*As an example of easily sharing your campaigns, British colleagues from the TUC built a petition platform that not only hosts their own campaigns but also allows for any trade union member or supporter to post their own petition and to control the messaging themselves. This allows for superior reach because political initiatives from the ground can be put up by those who know the terrain and share their messaging with workers and supporters who then get included on wider union activist lists.*

*An interesting inquiry to better understand the environment of the right and far-right has been released by the ANPI, the Italian National Association of Partisans – an organisation that is always very attentive to anti-democratic organisations and actions happening in Italy and abroad. After having investigated Facebook and Twitter, they reported on the use of Telegram by far-right groups. The investigation is really thorough, and the main outcome is that Telegram is the online place where groups and movements let the most radical violent and racist, anti-Semitic and subversive impulses emerge freely, strengthened by greater anonymity, in a real black galaxy. See more here:*

*<https://www.patria indipendente.it/persona-e-luoghi/inchieste/la-galassia-nera-su-telegram/>*



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