

Industrial Sector Graphical, Paper and Media

(Graphical, Printing and Media Industry)

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Industry profile

Graphical, Printing and Media:

- The print industry has a turnover of £14b.
- They have a positive trade of £1b (2009).
- UK is the worlds 5th largest producer of printed products and printed material and accounts for over 40% of marketing.
- The GPM Sector has membership throughout the graphical, printing and media.
- Unite in the media is affiliated to Uni-Graphical and Uni-Europa Graphical.
- The sector skills council is Proskills.

Trade union profile

- The GPM sector of Unite is the main union in print, publishing and media
- The NUJ also have members in media and publishing

Major organised employers:

Polestar, Walstead, Trinity Mirror, Northern & Shell, Guardian Media, Associated News, Thomson Reuters, Johnson Press, Prinovis, Random House, RR Donnelley, Macmillan Publishers, De La Rue and Communis.

Collective bargaining:

Although there has been no collective bargaining for wage increases for the last three years, Unite still holds a national agreement with the British Printing Industries Federation which covers almost 30,000 employees in over 1,000 workplaces. At present negotiations for wage increases are at site level.

In the publishing industry all collective bargaining is at site level. There is also a national agreement with Graphic Enterprise Scotland but again there has not been any collective bargaining for wages for the last three years. This agreement covers members in around 15 companies.

Unite negotiates at local level in commercial printing companies and newspapers in the Republic of Ireland.

Workers Uniting

The Graphical, Paper and Media sector of Unite is working closely with our brothers and sisters in the USA/Canada via Workers Uniting, Workers Uniting is the name of the new international union created by Unite and the United

Steelworkers (USW). Workers Uniting is the union of 3 million members of Unite and the USW working together to protect their jobs, pay and benefits in the face of the ever increasing power of multinational companies.

Key sector issues

The main threat to the print and publishing industry, specifically to books, magazines and newspapers is the move to electronic publishing, for example e-books. There is over capacity in the newspaper and especially the magazine sector, coupled with that, it is an industry that is in decline.

There was huge investment in new presses during 2007/2008 in the UK for newspapers and magazines, coupled with the financial collapse in 2008/2009, this exacerbated the situation with more companies with huge capacity on new super fast presses chasing a declining customer base. This has had a knock on effect throughout the whole industry affecting the very smallest printers and publishers.

Another threat to the print and publishing industry is the internet. Since 1995, when the internet was already well established in the UK, national daily newspaper circulation has declined by 21%. Compare this with the 32 million adults who are online, over 90% of which have broadband.

As a consequence of this, online news titles have enjoyed phenomenal growth. For example, the Mail online is up by 100% to 18.7 million users worldwide, 5 million of whom are in the UK. The Telegraph and the Guardian are not very far behind with over 18 million and the Sun hits nearly 15 million every month worldwide.

It is clear that for the future of news there will be a shift away from paid for circulation to on-line news content. Young people do not read newspapers – fact. In the same way advertising has had to re-structure itself to encompass and exploit the uses of the internet. It is the growth of these news and advertising web sites that could allow for the fallow times for newspapers. It is estimated that top newspaper web sites generated £20 million in revenue in 2007 and this is sure to grow exponentially over the next five years.

We can see that there are a number of significant issues challenging the newspaper industry in Europe; the number of mergers and company buyouts, the growth in multi-national companies with workers in a very diverse range of countries and the onward march of technological modernity is of great importance to trade unions. It is hardly surprising therefore that the significance and relativity of European Works Councils has never been more crucial.

