PHOTOGRAPHY rates paid by trade unions, including our own, are among this month’s crop of Rates for the Job, indicating what rates freelances are actually getting paid for their work.

Thinking about work for a company you’ve not dealt with before? Look at the Rate for the Job to find out what companies in similar niches have paid. Then aim higher. You can submit rates online at www.londonfreelance.org/rates – please give not only the basic rate (e.g. for First British Serial rights) but extra payments negotiated for extra uses, like the Web. These are shown as (eg) £400+100. Rates marked X are, in the editor’s fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even perhaps the happy few.

Broadcasting: Podcasting day (says UK Audio Network) £150; radio show, podcast £135; Voice of America (Turkish language service) Brexit update 5 min live segment £100; BBC Click Live at Victoria and Albert Museum, Dundee, runner 9am to 9pm for rehearsal and show live £100 offer declined XXXXX.

Photography: research project at Cardiff University, six days filming and photos £3000; NUJ, per day! £300; PCS People (trade union magazine), half-day portrait shoot – £275; AFL-CIO (US trade union confederation), per pic – £200; Prospect (trade union member magazine) half day £180; Housing Report, per pic £95; university website for press releases – expenses not paid, per hour £1.39 above Northern Ireland minimum wage.

The rate for the job

The Rate for the Job

The Trireme

The Trireme is awarded for what one freelance called “the worst terms since I was last chained to the oars”. This month’s Trireme goes to the Belfast Telegraph, reported by one RTF contributor as paying £86.00 for a reporting shift. For a seven-hour shift, that would be £12 an hour before tax. Anyone earning enough to pay tax would take home £9.60 an hour net, £1.39 above Northern Ireland minimum wage.

Photo: A member of the Trireme Trust

Nine days fighting for equal pay

NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanisstreet has written an account of nine days spent accompanying BBC presenter Samira Ahmed – and crowds of supporters – to the Industrial Tribunal hearing her case against the BBC over the gender gap in pay compared to male presenters. It’s well worth a read at www.bit.ly/NUJ-129 – in NUJ Informed, the newsletter of the NUJ’s National Executive Council (NEC), the body that sets Union policy between Delegate Meetings. A decision on Samira’s case is expected sometime during December 2019 at the earliest.

Raise fees by 50 per cent, orders Dutch judge

IN a “historic judgement”, a judge in Amsterdam ruled that the fees paid in 2018 to two Dutch freelance journalists – 13 euro cents a word and €42 per photo – were not “fair” in law. The judge ordered their client DPG Media to retrospectively put an extra 5 per cent on top of the fees currently paid to freelances.

Journalists Britt van Uem and Rued Rogier were supported in their court case by the NVJ, the NUJ’s Dutch sister union. Britt worked for Tubantia and her colleague Rued worked for the Brabantse Dagblad. These both operate a near-monopoly in local print media in the Netherlands. Both journalists had stopped working for Persgroep before bringing their case. The NVJ’s Secretary for Independents (freelances) Rosa Garcia Lopez in a press release praised Britt and Rued for “sticking their necks out” not just for themselves but for the benefit of all their fellow journalists. She added that the new 50 per cent higher tariffs resulting from the court ruling are still an “absolute minimum” rather than a suggested market rate. Britt said that the judge had ruled that freelances must be valued and compensated in the same way as their staffer colleagues.

Otto Volgenant, lawyer for Rued and Britt, said that the €42 per photo that Rued received was for between four and five hours of his time, while Britt put in about four hours for her article for which she was paid 13 cents a word. Otto added that DPG Media/Persgroep’s profits were around €100 million a year. Lopez in a tweet shortly after the judgement said that the NVJ and DPG Media were now “in talks”.

The case was based on the relatively new Auteurscontractenwet (Authors’ Contracts Act), which states that remuneration for a commission must be “fair” and if necessary a judge can determine what is fair. For a report on a recent NVJ “festival” for Dutch freelance journalists, see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1910fdoj.html.

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The Creators’ Rights Alliance, of which the NUJ is a member, will shortly launch a campaign for similar legislation in the UK.

Warning to the self-employed: do your taxes!

YOU’VE already missed the deadline to send in a tax return on paper for tax year April 2018-April 2019. Now you can only do your tax return for that period via www.bit.ly/FL-HMRC online. You have until 31 January 2020 to do this. There are automatic three-figure fines for failing to submit your tax return by the deadline. So get a move on.

If you became self-employed in tax year 2018-2019 you need to register with HMRC and get a password for the Government Gateway portal for online tax returns and also get a Unique Tax Reference number. Contact the HMRC enquiry line on 0300 200 3300 now as you’ll need a password sent to you by post before you can start using HMRC’s online portal to file a tax return.

You may also want to take the opportunity now, before the January rush, to find out whether there are any gaps you need to fill with your “Class 2” National Insurance (NI) contributions. If you’ve neglected to pay voluntary “Class 2s” via your tax return for any period, the resulting holes in your NI history will affect your state pension entitlements.

Self-employed EU nationals resident in the UK who haven’t yet applied for the EU Settled Status scheme should note that their application will be based largely on HMRC data. Such data will be important to “evidence your residence” – establish that you’ve lived continuously in the UK for five years. If you’re an EU national whose tax records aren’t up to date, seek guidance now.

Words: © Matt Salusbury

The Freelance is not qualified to give financial advice.