

AFP Elections: What's at Stake and Why You Should Feel Concerned



The "*élections professionnelles*", which concern all AFP staff working under French labour contracts, start on Friday October 10th and end on Monday October 20th at 2:00 p.m. Paris time (1200 GMT).

Voting takes place via a secure web site. If you are eligible to vote you should by now have received an envelope containing the address and the secret codes that allow you to do so. NB: Expatriates receive this via their bureau; for all other staff it arrives by postal mail at their home.

If you think you are eligible but have not received the envelope, please contact us at sudafp@orange.fr as soon as possible. You may vote from your place of work, or from home.

Forget the France-Bashing: This Concerns You

For some reason it has long been fashionable, notably in the English-language press, to denounce French labour law and the protections it affords.

Experience shows, however, that the laws in question are essential for protecting working conditions and ensuring a minimum of social justice. And if you view the French unions as part of the problem rather than the solution, it's important to realise that they are, by definition, the only show in town for HQ status staff.

If unions such as *SUD* were not there, many of the rights AFP staff still possess would have been eroded years ago.

Of course, anyone among AFP anglophone staff who's eager to work longer hours or more years for less pay, or to see younger colleagues remain indefinitely on short-term contracts, can stop reading here!

What, and Who, You'll be Voting For

Voting is on the basis of lists, presented by **representative trade unions** (see overleaf).

You will be voting to elect people to two separate institutions: the **Works Committee** (*comité d'entreprise*, or *CE*) and the **staff delegates** (*délégués du personnel* or "*DPs*"), often referred to in English as shop stewards.

For each of those institutions, you elect a main candidate (*titulaire*) and an alternate (*suppléant*). This means you have a total of four votes to cast. As their names suggest, the *suppléants* are there to stand in for the main representative if the latter is unavailable, but in practice at AFP, *suppléants* can often play a very active role alongside the *titulaires*.

By agreement between unions and management, the elections are held every three years.

Once the results are known, the elected delegates meet to hold an indirect election, of members to the Health & Safety Committee (*Comité d'hygiène, de sécurité et des conditions de travail*, or *CHSCT*).

Comité d'entreprise

Many AFP staff are mainly aware of the **works committee** as a place to go for goodies such as gifts for children at Christmas or enrolment in summer camps. However the heart of the "*CE*" is its role as a consultative body that management has to inform of all strategic questions relating to the company's development, and notably of all moves involving changes to staffing.

By law a number of annual official reports, such as the one on overall staffing and industrial relations (*bilan social*) and another on women-men equality (*rapport égalité hommes-femmes*) have to be submitted to the committee. If it is not satisfied by the information provided, or the overall situation in the company, the

works committee can take various legal measures. It can also call in outside auditors, which the AFP committee does on a regular basis.

The monthly proceedings of the AFP works committee, which is presided by the CEO, are recorded and transcribed verbatim, in minutes that are available on the intranet.

In 2011, a *SUD* candidate was elected to the works committee, and with your help this year we should have not only a *titulaire* but also a *suppléant* on that body.

Délégués du personnel

The job of the *délégués du personnel* is above all to bring staff grievances, either individual or collective, to the attention of management. By law management has to organise monthly meetings with the *DPs* and reply in writing to their questions. At AFP, the meetings are held in two separate sessions (a custom that *SUD* opposes): one for journalists and one for non-journalists. The journalists' monthly meeting is informally known as "*DPJ*".

Délégués du personnel are also able to bring cases to the attention of the labour inspector (*inspecteur du travail*).

An **English Desk journalist** is the number-one candidate on *SUD's* list of *suppléants*. This means that, with your support, an anglophone stands a real chance of being elected to this important job to ensure that AFP staff are informed of what is going on and to defend your interests on all levels.

Union Representativity

Due to a recent change in the law, unions have to glean at least 10% of the overall vote in these elections in order to be judged **representative**.

***SUD* is a recently-created union, and therefore something of a challenger. In the last election, three years ago, we won 10.4% of the overall vote. We need to do at least as well, and if possible better, this year if we are to go on helping and informing you as we have for the past three years.**

***SUD's* Record**

An English version of our **electoral platform for journalists** can be found on our web site at <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article282>, and a "**progress report**" detailing what we see as our main achievements over the past three years is at <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article278>.

Those achievements include an improvement in the statutory career plan for journalists which ensures that everyone can reach 5th category before retiring, and a strengthening of the insistence that more women be hired in blue-collar technical jobs.

Not forgetting our epic, single-handed legal struggle that won the right of all nationalities to take part in the three-yearly elections of representatives to the AFP board of governors.

**If you want *SUD* to keep up the good work,
vote for us in these elections—and tell others to do likewise.**

Every Vote Counts—Give Us Yours!

NB: When voting, we ask you not to cross out any candidates, which penalises the list as a whole.

Paris, October 8, 2014

SUD-AFP Trade Union (Solidarity – Unity – Democracy)

Sud
Solidaires
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Union
Syndicale
Solidaires

Union
Syndicale
Sud
Solidaires
CULTURE & MEDIAS