

# For a Worldwide AFP, A Worldwide Workforce



AFP staff around the world rose massively to the occasion during the election of the two representatives to the AFP board, which took place from June 10 to 20. In Kinshasa and Kuala Lumpur, Lima and Washington, Moscow and Hong Kong, Gaza and Jerusalem, Montevideo and Tokyo, large numbers of local-status staff used their newly-acquired right to vote, while people who have traditionally enjoyed voting rights also turned out in great numbers.

Independently of the specific results and circumstances of the vote, the strong increase in participation compared to the previous poll in 2011 was a major surprise.

Our analysis of voting patterns<sup>1</sup>, below, puts paid to a number of preconceived ideas.

## Local-Status Staff Make Their Voices Heard

Of the 855 journalists who voted, 522 had French labour contracts (ie "HQ status") with the remaining 333 on "local-status" contracts. In the electoral college for "non-journalists", 449 people took part of whom 322 were "HQ status" and 127 "local status".

In other words, almost 500 staff members who do not have "headquarters status" took part in the vote. This is new, and something to celebrate for SUD. For the 2014 poll marks a milestone in our long struggle to ensure that this international election, the only one that allows all categories of staff to take part, become truly worldwide and no longer be marred by voter discrimination<sup>2</sup>.

That aim has now been almost achieved: only staff working in German for the GMBH subsidiary, and most staff working on short-term contracts, remain excluded from the vote – a situation we hope to correct in time for the next election, due in 2017.

## Strong Turn-Out Among Journalists

Detailed voting figures from the latest election undermine a number of commonly-heard views, such as the idea that journalists mostly can't be bothered to vote, or that non-journalists tend to vote *en bloc* for the same candidate.

It is true that the overall turn-out rate among the 2,021 journalists eligible to vote worldwide was only 42.3%. But that figure marked a strong increase from the 31.58% rate in the previous poll. Above all, the overall rate masks considerable disparities between categories of journalists. Among technical and administrative ("non-J") staff meanwhile, the overall participation rate surged to 57.4%, as against 46.48% in 2011.

Here is the break-down of voting among **journalists**:

	Voters	Non-voters	Total voters	Turn-out
Permanent status, France	361	239	600	60.2%
Permanent status expats	114	61	175	65.1%
France-based stringers	43	154	197	21.8%
Other HQ (short-term contracts)	4	15	19	21.1%
<b>Total HQ-status Journalists</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>991</b>	<b>52.7%</b>
Full-time local-status journalists	264	354	618	42.7%
Local-status stringers	69	343	412	16.7%
<b>Total local-status journalists</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>32.3%</b>
<b>Total journalists worldwide</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>1,166</b>	<b>2,021</b>	<b>42.3%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Information about who voted in the election, which takes place by secret ballot, is confidential

<sup>2</sup> Under French labour law, the elections of union shop-stewards and works committee members concern only "HQ-status" staff. Between 2008 and 2011, SUD fought to ensure that all nationalities and categories could at least take part in the election of board reps. For more info, see <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article102>

Staff classified as “**non-journalists**” voted as follows:

	Voters	Non-voters	Total voters	Turn-out
Blue-collar (“ouvriers”)	90	45	135	66.7%
White-collar (“employés”)	68	43	111	61.3%
White-collar admin. (“cadres”)	84	51	135	62.2%
White-collar technical (“cadres”)	77	45	122	63.1%
Other HQ (short-term contracts)	3	18	21	14.3%
<b>Total HQ-status “non-J.”</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>61.5%</b>
Local-status admin. staff	95	110	205	46.3%
Local-status technical staff	32	19	51	62.7%
<b>Total local-status “non-J.”</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>49.6%</b>
<b>Total “non-J.” worldwide</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>57.6%</b>

Among long-term HQ-status non-journalist staff, the participation rate was massive: between 60.2 and 66.7%. And among local-status non-J employees, the rate varied from 42.7 to 62.7%. Those categories would no doubt like to see their interests defended as staff with full rights in an agency which despite its global presence does not grant everyone the same professional, social and democratic benefits.

It is also noteworthy that among HQ-status staff who have always enjoyed voting rights, certain people and even certain groups, refrained from taking part in the election.

## Pluralism and Democracy

Here are the full results of the 2014 election:

Journalists	votes	%	“Non-Journalists”	votes	%
De Courson	535	63.6%	Faye	322	74.0%
Douaihy	263	31.2%	Chatorrier	113	26.0%
Cisneros	43	5.1%			
Total for candidates	841		Total for candidates	435	
Blank ballots	14		Blank ballots	14	
Total votes cast	<b>855</b>		Total votes cast	<b>449</b>	

In each of the two colleges, the winning candidate gained a **clear majority**. Roland de Courson is the president of the AFP Society of Journalists (SDJ), while Philippe Faye is secretary of the Works Committee and an elected delegate for the CGT trade union. Meanwhile the existence of a **strong minority** in each college indicates that pluralism was respected and voters were given a democratic choice. Among journalists Samir Douaihy, supported by the CGT, FO and *SUD* unions, gleaned almost a third of votes. And in the “non-journalist” college Benoît Chatorrier, a *SUD* trade unionist, got over a quarter of the total vote.

We believe the above figures are useful in analysing the results of this election. Meanwhile we agree with the following analysis, as laid out by Samir Douaihy in his post-election message:

*“Adding together the results for journalists and non-journalists, it can be seen that candidates supported by the organisations that backed my bid obtained a total of 698 out of 1,276 votes, or 54.70% of valid votes cast. Conclusion: over the agency as a whole, the majority tendency is that which shows the strongest attachment to AFP’s statutes. The latter stipulate that AFP is a general interest mission in and of itself, and create a legal obligation for it to remain independent. In general terms, our company is divided into two tendencies: one which sets a high priority on vigilance, and the other more reformist. It is therefore just that as a result of the election, staff be represented on the AFP board by one representative of each of those two sensibilities.”*

Paris, July 9, 2014

**SUD-AFP (Solidaires - Unitaires - Démocratiques)**

**Sud** Solidaires  
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE