

2017 election of staff representatives to AFP's Board of Governors:

Voting is defending your rights!

From July 3 to 12, AFP staff around the world have the opportunity to elect three representatives --- two journalists and a member of the technical or administrative staff --- to represent them on the agency's Board of Governors. While these representatives may hold relatively little weight on the board where the majority of members are designated by media bosses and organizations dependent on the government, the vote is important for two reasons:



- **As the only worldwide election at AFP**, it gives employees an opportunity to show their unity and attachment to the common values that make AFP unique.
- Electing representatives to the agency's management body gives us an opportunity to express our views about the **strategic orientations** it has chosen.

More and more voters

According to the latest figures provided by management, **2,826** employees are on the voter lists.

- Of the **2,036 journalists** registered, 1,198 (**=59%**) work outside of France: stringers, local and regional journalists, expatriates.
- Of the **790 technicians and administrative** staff, 272 (**=34%**) work outside of France.

Strong participation in this election will demonstrate our desire to defend our rights, beginning with the one for which we had to wage a difficult struggle: the **right to vote**.

Not always a worldwide vote

At the beginning, the vote was reserved for just staff with French nationality. In the 1980s the right to vote was extended to employees with European nationality, but still more than a thousand employees, both HQ and local status, were excluded because they didn't have a European passport. The right for all to vote was the result of a long, uphill battle waged by *SUD*:

- 2008: An AFP journalist with Uruguyan nationality working in Paris appealed to the **Halde** (French Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Commission), which considered that employees excluded from the vote due to their nationality were the victims of **discrimination**.
- 2008: *SUD* launched a lawsuit, with a **QPC** (a challenge of the constitutionality of a legal provision) in 2010.
- 2011: The French **Conseil Constitutionnel** removed the criteria nationality, making the election to the Board of Governors a **worldwide vote**. Only the employees of subsidiaries (such as the German subsidiaries) are excluded.

The vote for stringers under threat

A senior member of management recently spoke of stripping the right to vote from **foreign stringers**. This is unacceptable! Isn't it the stringers in Syria, Mexico and elsewhere that are serving as the foundation of AFP's reputation?

SUD obtained in 2011 that all stringers working regularly for AFP, both in France and throughout the world, may vote in this election. We also succeeded in that the measure of the **regularity** of their work with AFP was the *number of stories* and not a *level of remuneration* (which penalizes stringers who work in countries where the wages are very low).

The vote for CDDs, apprentices and Pro contracts

Until this election, in order to be able to vote you had to *work without interruption for the six months preceding the vote*. Thus, in 2015, most CDDs, even those who had years of accumulated work experience for AFP, were denied the right to vote. The same for many employees on permanent contracts who had an interruption of their contract (for example a long illness). Our protests of these injustices in 2015 had an effect: in 2017, these restrictions were *relaxed*, permitting these employees to participate in the vote (as long as they have a valid contract at the moment of the election). This concerns a considerable number of CDDs.

For apprentices and those on professionalization contracts, the right to vote is not new but for each of those present it is the first vote at AFP in which they are participating.

First election following signature of the Grand Accord

For the 2017 election, *SUD* encouraged the formation of electoral lists which are running under the name **SOS-AFP**. They are present in both the journalist electoral college as well as the college for technical and administrative staff under the same, coherent platform that has been published in the six working languages of the agency: **AFP should serve the public interest (and nothing else)** (<http://u.afp.com/4nib>).

The SOS-AFP platform draws the lessons from the recent changes imposed upon AFP recently:

- The decision of the **European Commission** limiting AFP's public interest mission.
- The revision of AFP's founding **statute** that dates from 1957.
- Creation of the debt vehicle **AFP Blue**.
- Signature of an **Aims and Means Contract** (COM) that imposed further cost cutting.
- Cancellation of wage and benefits agreements and their replacement with the **Grand Accord**, a new collective bargaining agreement which reduced wages and benefits (in particular for new hires), without any improvements for local or regional staff.

These measures are a package. They were presented to the Board of Governors, which approved them, as indicates a statement published in 2015, a day after the wage and benefits agreements were abrogated by management:

"The governors representing the press, audiovisual media and the public authorities unanimously supported Emmanuel Hoog and the management of AFP, at a Board of Governors meeting held on July 20, in their decision to negotiate a single collective bargaining agreement"¹.

The 2017 election of staff representatives to the Board of Governors gives employees a chance to voice their opinion of this package of reforms, in particular on the Grand Accord. By voting for the SOS-AFP lists, we'll be supporting colleagues who have worked towards offering alternative options for AFP's development and intend to continue doing so on the Board of Governors. The candidates reflect the agency's multicultural character, and despite all working in Paris currently, know well the difficult conditions under which many local staff work.

Journalists electoral college:

SOS-AFP: 1. Samir DOUAIHY - 2. Sandra LACUT - 3. Richard LEIN - 4. Paz PIZARRO

Technical and administrative staff college:

SOS-AFP: 1. Christian BIFFOT - 2. Benoît CHATORRIER

Campaign and vote for the SOS-AFP lists!

¹ <https://www.afp.com/fr/lagence/communiqués-de-presse/communiqué-des-administrateurs-representant-la-presse-les-medias-audiovisuels-et-les>