

Review of our 2014-2018 mandate:

A different trade unionism is possible



As the workplace elections in October draw near, SUD-AFP presents a review of our actions since the previous election in 2014. We consider such a presentation to be a normal part of democratic transparency, and we do it without hesitation as we did ahead of the 2014 election.¹

Making the right choice is essential!

Not all trade unions are the same. The major event of the term -- the signature of the "Grand Accord" of 10 March 2017 -- shows how important it is for staff to make the right choice.

Who can negotiate and sign agreements?

Only trade unions which are recognized as *representative* in the sense of a 2008 law may designate representatives to negotiate and sign agreements with management. In the 2014 election all *six French trade unions* present at AFP received enough votes to be considered representative and participate in the social and institutional dialog in the Agency.

➤ *SUD participated actively in all of the negotiations, making suggestions and informing staff. We signed several agreements and refused to support others. A review of the agreements negotiated during the 2014-2018 term and our position can be found here: <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article520>.*

Why is the electoral result important?

Management needs to negotiate with and secure the approval of trade unions in order to carry out certain labor practices. For an accord to be adopted it must, depending on the case, be signed by all representative unions or by a certain number with a certain percentage of votes at the previous election.

The Grand Accord was signed by three unions with *more than 70% of the votes in 2014*: the SNJ and the CFDT - which almost always sign management's proposals - and the CGT, the top union at the agency, which had promised staff a course of resistance before flipping direction.

Results of 2014 elections (all categories):

CGT 33.9%, SNJ 26.8%, FO 12.9%, CFDT 11.3%, SUD 11.2%, CFE-CGC 4.0%²

➤ *While SUD is a minority union, it is representative.*

What resources do trade unions have?

We ask you, **which unions contributed something to the employees of the Agency by informing staff and defending our collective interests?** We bet SUD will be in your top 3! But you should know that our resources were very limited because we ended up with considerably less elected representatives than the top two unions, as the table below shows:

¹ Previous review and 2014 mission statement: <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article302> (in French)

² See our detailed analysis of the 2014 election: http://www.sud-afp.org/IMG/pdf/res_2014_analyse.pdf (in French)

Representatives elected in 2014	CGT	SNJ	FO	CFDT	SUD	CGC	Total
Members of the Comité d'entreprise (CE)	4	3	1	0	0	0	8
Shop stewards (DPJ, DPTA)	7	3	1	1	1	1	14
Alternates to the Comité d'entreprise (CE)	4	2	0	1	1	0	8
Alternate shop stewards (DPJ, DPTA)	7	3	1	1	1	1	14
Total	22	11	3	3	3	2	44

At *SUD* we know that to be effective we need to strive to *set an example*. We have to *work for the collective good, be ready to listen to our colleagues, learn certain skills, get training*. Members of our delegation need to be **activists** (while seeking a good balance between our professional, personal and union obligations).

- The activism of our small, inter-categorical team was supported by *SUD* members and by many colleagues who appreciated our work.

Our priorities: inform, explain, defend

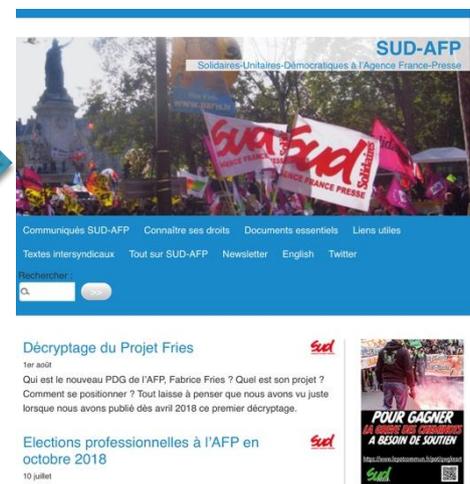
AFP's Statute sets it the objective to seek out "the elements of a complete and objective information service". But management does not apply that to itself, neither before French courts (for example: claiming that all AFP journalists are eligible for the forfait jours because we are all *autonomous in organizing our work*) nor in its internal communication. Take for example the evolution of our company intranet:

- The former intranet **Asap** allowed for a certain pluralism of expression, with the statements of trade unions, associations and even individuals on the same footing as those from management (as was the case with the DIR wire);
- **Aurore** has become a communication tool for management, which monopolizes the *Top News* section for itself, and trade union statements are consigned to a lower section where they appear with notices for lost bracelets and advertisements for used washing machines.

Thanks to the fact we received enough votes in 2014 to be considered representative, we have been at the source of information about the social dialog at AFP. We consider informing staff to be important to combat groupthink, disinformation, and a sense of resignation. And we believe we have been the most active in this regard by far.

Among our information resources:

- Our **website** www.sud-afp.org has all of the statements that *SUD* has published over many years, joint union texts, texts on various subjects and many other documents. A good number of our statements exist in English as well.
- Our page **Aurore futée** (Smart Aurore) makes finding a lot of practical AFP information easier (for example, the wage scales under the Grand Accord): <http://u.afp.com/AFutee>
- Our **newsletter SUD-Infos** (new version) is designed to avoid spam filters and provide regular information about *SUD*-AFP: <http://u.afp.com/oB2M>





More than a spanner in the works

Many of our colleagues tell us they appreciate *SUD* for informing staff and being a “*spanner in the works*” that frustrates management projects and pushes other trade unions to act. That is a bit simplistic. Our record over more than a decade has shown that **a minority trade union can be effective in obtaining results when it is coherent and combative.**

This term has been one characterized by cuts to benefits and budgets, as well as attacks on AFP’s founding principles. In addition to resisting those developments, *SUD* has also been active on the following:

The 2015 summer scam

During the summer of 2015 our employer unilaterally withheld paying most of us a considerable sum and said it would pay us the amount due in June 2016 in what amounted to **a forced savings plan**. A lawsuit we filed forced management to **halt the practice**, break open the piggy bank early, and pay what it owed us along with our salaries in February 2016. See: <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article389>

A “one-shot” bonus for all

Management wanted to reserve the money from the only wage agreement during the 2014-2018 term for performance bonuses for a small number of staff of its choosing. *SUD* fought against management’s proposal and instead obtained a fair sharing out of the amount. As a result of the agreement signed by the SNJ, CFDT and *SUD*, all French contract employees including those on short-term and work-study contracts received a one-shot bonus of €115 gross (around €90 after taxes). See: <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article435> (in French) - It may not be much, but it is better than nothing.

Stringer wage hike

As part of the same wage agreement we obtained the first wage hike for stringers since 2009, even if it was just 0.75%. We still don’t understand why some trade unions didn’t sign.

The SPQN lawsuit

Management owes us three cost of living adjustments decided at the level of the national press negotiating group (SPQN) which should have been applied in 2013 and 2014. Three unions - CGT, FO and *SUD* - have filed lawsuits and *the district court ruled in our favor*. **The appeal could be heard as soon as the end of this year**. What is at stake is a **wage hike of 1.4% for all plus back pay**.

Individual cases

SUD has not only defended our collective interests, but has also helped individual employees who find themselves in distress or whose individual demands don’t contradict with the overall interest. In addition to the monthly meeting between shop stewards and management, *SUD* has also consulted lawyers, met with the labor inspector and even gone to court. These actions are often not visible to the public, and while our efforts haven’t always succeeded, in several cases we have achieved the desired results.

Defeats could have been avoided

The small successes listed above, the fruit of patient and tenacious work, can't hide the fact that these past years have been marked by a series of **collective defeats, setbacks** both in French society and at AFP. The times are not good.

However, history shows us that **social advances were the result of struggles**. And that **reversals were often the result of a choice not to fight**.

Some of the major changes during 2014-2018 term:

2015 - The undermining of AFP's statute

With Fabrice Fries seeking to turn AFP into a one-armed bandit it is time for everyone to finally understand why: the 2015 reform of AFP's statute brought us into line with EU competition rules. But the EU set such a very high bar for the renewal of AFP's public interest mission in 2025 that it is likely to disappear.

SUD has repeatedly warned against the breaking up of AFP, but as yet has not been successful in building a united front.

2017 - The anti-social "Grand Accord"

The same goes for the collective bargaining agreement of 10 March 2017, which picked away at the benefits that were built up during a half century of social progress. The majority trade unions signed the agreement without even trying to mobilize staff, or even consulting them. The result is as we feared: now that they've seen they can turn the screw without problems, management is planning to do it again, and this time the damage will likely be even more considerable.

Faced with management's new plans we can no longer just remain "vigilant". **Only by working together can we avoid further losses**, whether that concerns defending a pluralist media or our own benefits.

**In order to not submit you have to act.
Help make *SUD* stronger - join us.
In October, vote and tell others to vote *SUD*.**

***SUD*-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)**
5 September 2018

Sud
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

