

# A dialog of the deaf!

While AFP's management celebrates its "Quality Working Life Week" it is not taking measures to halt the degradation of working conditions. An example: the French desk reform which is still a problem (see our previous communiqué: <https://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article640>).

**One has to applaud** the courageous interventions by staff members about problems with the reform during a Q&A session with editorial management, which pushed the head of human resources for journalists into admitting that the reform of the French desk "hasn't worked out like we planned."

Unfortunately, one didn't have to wait long (the following day at the monthly CSE meeting, to be exact) for management to change its tune and blame staff: if there are difficulties with the reform, they are "due solely to people taking vacation simultaneously" and that "not everyone wants the reform to succeed".

But while their reform is **taking on water** and **working conditions and quality suffer**, management is playing for time instead of taking action. *Wait for the summer vacation period to pass, everything will work out* – is their message. The consequence of that option, of course, is that nothing will improve for months and desk editors will have to put up with the current situation, feeling like they have not been heard and becoming discouraged.

Before maligning staff for supposedly undermining the reform, management would do better to ask itself whether it is putting in a good faith effort to find solutions. Instead, it seems content to emphasize that there are 65 people on the desk, with the implication that this is an enormous number and it should be able to solve any and all problems.

But this is an insidious argument:

- there are not 65 full-time staff on the desk;
- only a fraction are there at a given time during the day;
- and 65 is less than the total number of journalists on the desks before they were merged, with nine posts alone going under the "voluntary departure plan" (PDV).

**It's a fact, there are less people working on the desk for more work.** That's not surprising as it was one of the stated objectives of the reform, which was driven more by bean counting than editorial objectives.

To fill the holes in staffing management is counting on the **multi-functionality** of journalists. However, **not only has this not worked** and management backed off in practice on the desk, **above all it is undesirable**. If desk journalists are to do more than catch typos and correct grammatical errors, it is important they conserve certain specializations.

*SUD* nevertheless welcomes the start of a dialog in recent days, even if actions are so far lacking. The absence of an eco duty editor is being keenly felt and despite the issue having been repeatedly raised, management has put off a decision until a new chief takes his post.

## **The French desk should be strengthened, not weakened!**

Finally, we would like to remind staff that, if they encounter difficulties, they may turn to AFP's staff doctor or their union representatives. It is important during this period of intense remote work to avoid becoming isolated.

Paris, June 15, 2021

**SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)**