

Neighboring rights:

No to botched negotiations!

SUD-AFP wishes to inform the Agency's employees on the state of the negotiations concerning **neighboring rights**, which have started off on the wrong foot for reaching an agreement that is good for staff.

On November 17, management signed a **"historic" agreement with Google** under which the US tech giant agreed to pay neighboring rights for the use of our content. French law includes a provision stating that **journalists** "*are entitled to an appropriate and equitable share of the remuneration*" received for neighboring rights. (See our statement <https://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article656>.)

On January 10, management invited unions to a first meeting where we discovered that it had already set a strict and very short framework for the negotiations. It expects a deal to be hashed out in two meetings, on February 2 and February 14, so in less than 15 days!

This **suspicious haste** leads us to believe that the negotiations will be botched although the stakes are enormous: giving all the Agency's journalists around the world a share of the money. Moreover, there is no reason to rush. The contract with Google is for five years.

And in addition to the hasty pace, the negotiations are plagued by a **lack of transparency**. Management says the amount of the contract is top secret because of a confidentiality clause imposed by Google. Even union delegates representing staff in the negotiations do not have access to it. But without it, how can we determine what is an "*appropriate and fair share*" for journalists?

Management wants us to negotiate blindly, talking about a slice of a cake the size of which we don't know, meaning we're not sure people will get anything more than a crumb (management has already proposed a ridiculous 7% of the total for journalists). This is unacceptable!

On the other hand, management has accepted the idea that **other categories of AFP staff** – who contribute to the smooth running of the Agency and thus to our editorial production – also benefit a little from the Google windfall. But as the law only mentions journalists as beneficiaries, management wants to do this via another mechanism. Except we don't know yet what this mechanism will be and management wants to negotiate it later. Mere promises...

SUD-AFP calls on management to put an end to this charade. Together with other trade unions, we have demanded elaborating a **framework agreement** on the negotiations specifying the information we will receive, even if this means finding a creative solution concerning the amount of the Google deal.

Unions must also be able to have a legal expert participate in the negotiations, and the schedule of meetings – which is far too short to deal with such a complex and new issue – must be reviewed.

Finally, the framework agreement must mention the mechanism that would allow compensating technical and administrative staff, as well as its negotiation.

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SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)

