

Purchasing power:

50-euro wage hike? An insult to injury!



A staff assembly was held on Friday, June 10 at the call of Paris trade unions to inform employees about the state of play in the wage negotiations with management to compensate our loss of purchasing power due to soaring inflation. The negotiations were opened earlier than normally scheduled at the request of unions.

But if management agreed to meet with unions, it played deaf to our demands. What does management plan to compensate for our loss of purchasing power? **A one-size-fits-all raise of 50 euros (gross) paid from September (worth 650 euros for the year) and nothing more in 2023!**

That compares with the demand by unions of **a wage hike of at least 5%** to help confront rising prices of food and fuel.

To help compare the difference, 5% annual inflation represents a loss of 1,625 euros for someone earning 2,500 net per month. For someone who earns 3,500 euros per month net, the loss is 2,275 euros. And that loss comes after a decade of minimal wage adjustments, a voluntary departure plan and heavier workloads...

On Friday, the approximately 400 employees who attended the staff assembly in person and remotely, voted nearly unanimously for a **motion** charging the unions to **negotiate a wage hike "at least the level of inflation"**. The unions asked management for a meeting before the **next staff assembly** set for Thursday, **June 16**, and that it responds to their "legitimate expectations" to "safeguard our purchasing power".

Following the adoption of the motion by the staff assembly, management announced Friday afternoon it would meet with staff representatives on Wednesday morning, June 15.

During the previous talks, management had defended its proposition of a flat 50-euro wage increase as being advantageous to low-paid staff.

SUD certainly isn't against giving a little boost to the lowest paid amongst us, but inflation is touching us all and **everyone should thus benefit from a cost-of-living adjustment of at least 5%**. If, after that, management wants to boost the salaries of those at the bottom of our wage scales, *SUD* would be very happy.

Don't forget that AFP has money. Management recently took the time to speak with staff about the Agency's situation, its plans and its strategy – in order to pour cold water on staff expectations for a cost-of-living increase! The message was clear (and predictable): all the indicators are green, but not enough for a cost-of-living increase. But green enough for its projects, curiously. Repay the debt faster. No problem. Clean off the facade of the HQ building. Again, no problem, we've got the money...

(/...)

Wage hike? No, just a cost-of-living adjustment

In an added flourish of cynicism, management also presented to trade unions a table indicating that wages at AFP are rising faster than inflation... because of our career plans! This is saying that management now sees these as no longer serving to reward increased qualifications and experience but to compensate for inflation during our career! That these are no longer designed to ensure your purchasing power increases over your career, but that it stays the same.

No adjustment of our wage scales means a progressive impoverishment of the staff. New entrants will start at the same place despite inflation. From there out, those with career plans will be more or less protected. But not all AFP staff have career plans and those for journalists last only 20 years.

With price jumps that are hitting all parts of society it would be just for the French state to accept its responsibility to increase its funding for AFP as the cost of carrying out our public interest mission is rising.

But neither the state nor our management are thinking along those lines. The state has been disengaging from AFP for years and doesn't appear inclined to make a turnaround (unless the parliamentary majority changes on June 19), while management has every interest in satisfying the state.

Contrary to most of the staff, senior members of management are unlikely to spend their entire careers at AFP. And how to best ensure their career perspectives?

It is thus up to us to force management's hand. To do that, we have no choice but for **an unwavering staff mobilization**.

That is why the trade unions have called for another staff assembly for the 16th. Without you, we can't obtain anything.

We aren't demanding anything extravagant, simply a cost-of-living adjustment to ensure we don't lose out.

Paris, June 14, 2022

SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)

Sud
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE