

# Thank you for your sacrifice



Information is our business. And yet, internally, we're very bad at it. Did you know that **AFP has raised wages across most of Europe to compensate for inflation**? We didn't. We found out about it by accident. From an offhand remark in a management email informing London staff of a unilateral wage hike following a petition from staff.

Management confirmed that it is indeed proceeding with a wage hike for the "quasi-totality" of European bureaus but declined to provide a breakdown. Well, that was like waving a red rag in front of a bull, so we set about finding out who got what. And what did we find out: many staff don't know whether they are getting a wage hike.

While some bureau chiefs may be on vacation, it appears at least some haven't been good at informing their staff. You would think, in these times where the money in our pocket doesn't go as far as it did until just recently, management would want to let us know we'll get (a bit) more of it. Apparently not.

It's a good question: why not? **We suspect that management doesn't want staff asking why others got a better deal.** Of course, from our perspective, staff have every right to know if they are (or are not) getting a fair deal (relative to others). So here is what we've learned so far, with the proviso that some of the information may not be complete as we are relaying what staff members have been told.

Bureau	Annual inflation rate June 2022 in %	Wage hike in %	Uncompensated inflation in %	Percentage inflation compensated	Percentage inflation uncompensated
London	9.4	4.0	5.4	42.6	57.4
Vienna****	8.7	3.6	5.1	41.4	58.6
Paris*	5.8	2.3	3.5	39.7	60.3
Berlin / Frankfurt	7.6	2.5	5.1	32.9	67.1
Warsaw	15.6	3.0	12.6	19.2	80.8
Belgrade	11.9	2.0	9.9	16.8	83.2
Madrid**	10.2	1.8	8.5	17.2	82.8
Athens	12.1	2.0	10.1	16.5	83.5
Moscow	15.9	0.0	15.9	0.0	100.0
Stockholm	8.7	?			
Rome	8.0	?			
Ankara / Istanbul	78.6	?			
Geneva	3.4	?			
Brussels***	9.7	automatic			

\* This is the average impact of various measures. See the text for further explanation.  
\*\* Madrid staff are getting 1.5% or 2% depending on their salary level.  
\*\*\* Belgium has automatic wage indexation laws. We don't know when the next increase will happen  
\*\*\*\* Austria also has automatic wage indexation regulations

**First observation:** we still don't know what several bureaus have gotten. It is summer, but it is also quite clear that managers aren't communicating very well.

**Second:** Moscow is getting shafted. It is hard to believe that a bureau under such pressure is getting treated so shabbily. Several of the bureau's journalists have fled abroad due to the threat of being prosecuted, but not all, and administrative and technical staff are keeping the office functioning. And management can't point to the fact that their salaries are pegged to the euro is helping them as Western sanctions and Russian countermeasures have seen the ruble strengthen, meaning that local staff are getting even less rubles in their pocket. It is clear something urgently needs to be done for Moscow staff. Kyiv-based

staff are in a similarly difficult financial situation, with the threat of being bombed rather than going to jail.

Inflation is also incredibly high in Turkey. A wage agreement negotiated by the local union is in place, but we were unable to learn the details of when exceptional measures may kick in.

**Third:** there is quite a disparity between bureaus in terms of how much inflation is being compensated. We compiled the column "Percentage inflation compensated" to provide a means to compare between bureaus. While London and Paris are getting around 40% of inflation compensated by a wage hike, smaller bureaus are getting half that. Why?

One conclusion that we have reached is: **it pays to mobilize.** Paris staff and trade unions pushed management to open wage talks. Even if *SUD* believes we could have gotten a better deal (see our tract for our analysis of the deal<sup>1</sup>), the fact that we mobilized obviously ensured we got a better deal than most others.

London's experience also shows that we might have gotten a better deal. Management's unilateral 4.0% offer was made to short circuit the NUJ's efforts to mobilize staff for a 10% hike. It certainly seems possible that they can obtain more if they begin real negotiations.

We can't help but comment on the fact that others are getting **wage hikes in percentage terms.** This was something that management refused to do for us, affirming its ideological opposition to a general wage hike. Hooey! Even if in (*at least*) one bureau the wage increase is modulated by salary level. If we put 2.3% in our table for France, that is because it is the average for the measures accorded by management. But we all got the same bonus and a reduction in health insurance contributions.

The use of the bonus erodes our wage scales. It is against the long-term interest of staff, who once they climb the wage scale ladder, find the roof not to be as high off the ground as they had expected and to have a very gentle slope in terms of wage increases as they get further promotions.

We must also consider the fact that no one is getting compensated for even half of inflation. Some will say that what we are getting is better than nothing. That's true if your point of comparison is – *nothing*. And one could be forgiven for looking at it that way, because most of us have gotten almost nothing in recent years in terms of cost-of-living adjustments. But when we go out to the supermarket or fill up the car, what we feel is the column "Percentage inflation uncompensated". This is our **wage cut** in real terms.

Management likes to talk about the Agency's financial constraints. But have we heard our CEO mention the fact that AFP's public interest mission (MIG) confided by the French state has been regularly under-compensated? Have we heard him request that it be fully compensated? Has he asked that the budgeted cost of our mission, set at €113.3 million for the 2019-2023 period, also be adjusted for inflation so AFP doesn't have to bear the cost? Have we heard him ask that the price the French state pays for our services, set at €20.54 million since 2015, also be increased in line with inflation? Certainly not! It seems management is content to fall deeper into the grip of tech platforms to partially compensate for the effects of inflation.

For the rest, it is up to us to make sacrifices for the Agency to keep fulfilling the mission it was entrusted with by the French state. **Thank you for your sacrifice!**

Paris, July 26, 2022

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



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article681>