

Wages: 2% wage hike Is historic and insufficient

Management and trade unions held their third meeting on wages on October SUD signed the accord at the end of the 2023 wage talks. The 2%* wage hike far from fully compensates our lost purchasing power. But without a staff movement pressuring management it was impossible to get more. The symbol of the extent of AFP wage scales having fallen behind inflation over the past decade is that the lowest rung is under the French minimum wage and will likely remain so even after the wage hike.

The wage negotiations this year ended in a deal, which despite our disappointment, SUD signed as it contained several advances.

What we got:

- General wage hike of 2%* from May 1, 2024 for French contract staff and stringers
- One-shot €500 "Macron" bonus paid with November salary
- Sustainable transport subsidy of €100 per year
- Increase in the work medal bonus to €500

Why the asterisk on 2%? Because the increase is to the value of the point which determines our base salary. Only the base salary and certain bonuses that are calculated upon the base salary will be increased (such as the seniority bonus). The hike in the value of the point is important because all staff will see their base salary increase by 2%, which helps ensure a real progression in our wage scales. Other bonuses will not increase, such as the Prime Fixe Collective. That may be disappointing, but discussions on proportional wage hikes were always via the mechanism of the point.

The "Macron" bonus, on the other hand, is a one-shot payment of €500 that is favorable to those with low wages (in terms of proportion of total wages). In addition, it will go into our pockets before the holidays instead of making us wait for May 2024. For those who earn less than three times the minimum wage, the bonus is fully exempt from income taxes and social charges. CDDs beware: You have to be under contract on November 29 to receive any money, and the amount you receive will be proportional to the amount of time worked for AFP during the period from November 2022-October 2023.

Historic and yet insufficient

The 2% wage hike is at the same time historic and insufficient. Historic as our wage scales had been frozen since 2012. We had to go to court to get the hikes due in

2013 and 2014. Until recently, management rejected the principle of general wage hikes as it argued they raise costs too quickly.

But at the same time the 2% we're receiving is also far from sufficient. Since 2019, we've lost around 10% of our purchasing power even with the wage hikes we received. We feel that loss in purchasing power each time we step into a supermarket or pay a bill. The symbol of the erosion of AFP's wage scales over the past decade is the fact [the lowest rung has fallen below the French minimum wage](#), which is regularly adjusted for inflation. It will likely remain so following the increase to the minimum wage set for [January 1](#).

It's hard not to feel a bit bitter about this small increase given the fact that management has been renegotiating the Aims and Means Contract (COM) that sets the French state's support for the Agency for five years. The historic inflation we've experienced and recent difficult events (Covid pandemic, Ukraine) were an opportunity to dramatically increase support to allow the Agency to recover from its decade-long wage freeze as well as to invest in its future, which appears all the more crucial given the rise of fake news on social networks.

Insufficient funding boost by French state

And so how much more is AFP getting? €6.7 mn each year from 2024 plus small hikes in subsequent years. Our 2.0% wage hike will cost €2.2mn for a full year. And management acknowledged that it planned to pay for our 2022 wage hikes from this amount. The cherry on the cake is that the 2.0% wage hike is delayed to May 2024 because of exceptional events next year like the Olympic Games in Paris and the US presidential elections. Infuriating, isn't it? Management didn't get enough money to cover planned major events and give us a normal wage hike on January 1. This shows very clearly that management didn't get a sufficient increase in state support. Not to restore our purchasing power. Not to invest sufficiently in the future of the Agency. The new COM is just beginning and already management is searching for coins under the sofa cushions to accomplish our mission.

We need to look ahead to the 2024 wage talks

So there was no big boost in our wages, but we're partly responsible for this. Without the pressure of a movement it is unlikely we'll get AFP out of its financial straitjacket, which also results in increasing workloads for some via repeated reorganizations as management seeks to cut costs. We missed an opportunity in the spring of 2023 when staff decided not to support a strike movement. If we want to obtain more in next year's wage talks to avoid a further loss in purchasing power we need to think about mobilizing rapidly.

If you'd like to join us, drop us a note at contact@sud-afp.org. We always have a need for motivated people.

Paris, November 16, 2023

SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)

