

The 2% wage hike finally kicks in, But what's next?

Good news! Wages have been raised by (nearly) 2% for HQ status staff from the month of May. Stringer rates as well, but as their work in May is paid at the end June, they will only get their (full) 2% next month. This increase is the result of the last round of annual wage talks (NAO) in November 2023 and all the Paris-based trade unions signed the accord.

Some of you might notice that your transfer from AFP hasn't increased a full 2% from previous months, and that is completely normal. The deal called for a 2% increase in base wages, but not all bonuses are based on the base wage, which explains the slight difference. This method allowed for a proportional increase in wages after years of stagnation.

Why was this method chosen? It is up for each union to explain its choices, but for SUD, we believed that after years of base wages being frozen that we needed to get away from fixed-sum increases, like the €20 gross increase in 2021 and the €70 increase in 2022. These increases of the same amount for everyone were relatively advantageous for those with the lowest wages, but at some point, we need to defend the attractiveness of our wage scales. Our career plans only have a sense if there is a real step up between echelons. Some people at the beginning or middle of their careers may prefer these fixed-sum increases but by raising the entire wage scale we are protecting their future earnings when they are promoted.

SUD obtained during this NAO one of its long-time demands: an increase in the value of the bonus for the French Work Medal awarded for years of service, which hadn't been increased since France joined the euro. It has been increased from €305 to €500.

We are justified in welcoming this (nearly) 2% wage hike, but we shouldn't forget that it doesn't come close to compensating for the enormous loss in purchasing power from the recent inflationary crisis that followed long years where our wage scales weren't increased regularly. The consequence has been catastrophic for us. We previously calculated that for some staff the loss in purchasing power is the equivalent to being demoted an echelon!

We need to keep in mind this enormous loss of purchasing power in view of the upcoming wage talks after the summer break. SUD had proposed opening the 2024 wage talks at the beginning of the year with the idea of mobilizing staff ahead of the Paris Olympics to put pressure on management, but the proposal fell on deaf ears. Some find such tactics odious, but experience has shown they have been successful in obtaining bonuses and wage hikes. And isn't it much more odious that management has repeatedly evoked the possibility of job cuts to squelch demands for wage hikes? And how would you characterize management's recent self-congratulations for stabilizing the Agency's finances and successfully renegotiating the Aims and Means Contract with the French state... while repeatedly telling unions that we shouldn't hope for any considerable wage hikes in the coming years?

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