

## Departures decided, number of job cuts still unclear

**Last week, management informed trade unions that 34 French-contract employees had opted to take advantage of the retirement incentive program launched in October, and that it also anticipates a dozen departures among local contract staff. More details are expected to be provided at the Works Council (CSE) meeting on December 19.**

While the goal of approximately 70 departures across the network was not met, management has nearly achieved its target of 40 departures among French contract staff. However, the real question remains in suspense: **how many of these positions will not be filled, and which departments will ultimately be affected?**

In July, management stated that its objective was “100% no-replacement” while remaining vague to avoid inflaming staff opinion. The goal is to achieve several million euros in savings to offset a drop in commercial revenue. In his somber June video, our CEO expressed particular concern about the potential loss of fact-checking contracts with META outside the United States.

It now appears likely that the META contract will continue and the worst-case scenario envisioned by management seems to have been averted... and yet! Austerity measures are still in effect and management intends to make as many cuts as possible. Even if some positions will be retained, particularly in technical services, **SUD fears a wave of job losses in the newsroom.**

We have learned that management has already started planning to eliminate ten positions on the Paris French desk and five positions in the Parisian production services, in addition to cuts in other services.

### Risk of a loss of meaning in our work

We have already had a taste of the bitter future that awaits us: obsessed with whether this or that vacant position deserves to be filled, management does not hesitate to mix opportunism and cynicism when necessary, as in the attempt to eliminate an editorial assistant position in a French provincial office after a death earlier this year. Management took advantage of the situation to launch the idea of a “pooling” of tasks between assistants, as if their work, deep down, had little value and could suddenly be drastically reduced to save money.

While management backtracked and the position will be filled, its lack of vision and empathy is troubling. It took the insistence of unions, particularly SUD, to force management’s hand. We relentlessly demanded clear answers from management regarding its plans, while denouncing the attempt to bypass employee representatives to quietly launch reorganizations, in this case through “pooling,” taking advantage of the employees' goodwill.

Another department that has been affected: the Photo Lab. A temporary employee, who had been competently filling in for a lab technician who suffered a serious accident three years ago, won't have his contract renewed in December. The position is being eliminated outright. Faced with the shock of the team suddenly shrinking from five to four people, the HR department's reflex was to immediately send an email ordering a 20% cut in production. In just a few clicks, a department considered a showcase for the agency's photographic excellence has been stripped of a significant portion of its work. A textbook example of the cynicism and managerial opportunism prevalent at AFP, and of management's inability to grasp the extent to which the loss of meaning in their work can cause suffering among employees.

A similar situation exists at the Spanish desks in Paris: three temporary staff members who have been working full-time for years, even taking on the role of shift supervisor, have been told that their contracts will end in January, with no redeployment options offered. And how can these services, already overstretched, be kept running?

### **Management's advice: *Get used to it!***

Shockwaves also rippled through the Data Visualization department after journalists learned that the Montevideo graphic designer had left the agency after two decades of dedicated service. There had been no advance notice of his departure, no plan for how to reorganize. Now they will have to make do with a freelancer who doesn't even have access to AFP's systems. Faced with the department's anxiety, management declared: *We live in an uncertain world, we have to get used to it!* Nothing like that to fuel anxiety and prepare minds for the worst... and to make people accept the sacrifices to come?

As the weeks go by, worrying news continues to emerge, such as abrupt layoffs of employees in Latin America. Management talks of shortcomings, but the axe, as if by chance, falls on employees who have long worked for the Agency.

Meanwhile, management swears it wants to put an end to workplace suffering... and promises to address the cases raised by the labor inspector in Paris, which has a growing number of files. Yet articles in the French press are conveniently ignored, including in management's daily press review. And when a union representative (SUD) demands an investigation into an anonymous petition that seems to downplay cases of workplace suffering, the CEO invokes "freedom of expression".

This does not bode well for the upcoming reorganizations. However, management has accepted the unions' request, including SUD's, to bring in an expert to examine these plans, in order to prevent any excessive workload for employees and the emergence of new psychosocial risks.

### **Solidarity among staff is vital**

Contempt for employees, bypassing their representatives, chaotic management of reorganizations, and failing communication, even when it comes to replacing a few windows or fixing the toilets... the current management of AFP is sinking ever lower and seems incapable of reassuring staff.

Faced with these shortcomings, solidarity among employees is becoming vital to resist the loss of our values, the meaning of our mission, and the lack of strategic vision of a management team which sees the agency's salvation only in job cuts and the development of AI.

**Faced with this situation, it's understandable that some chose to take the retirement incentive package and leave an agency they no longer recognize. But those who remain have no choice but to resist what management presents as inevitable and reject the poison of uncertainty it sows everywhere. Staff must fight back, and SUD will always stand by their side.**

Paris, December 11, 2025

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

