

Psychosocial Risks Audit: Why Change a Losing Team?

SUD called repeatedly for a professional, external audit of psychosocial risks at the Agency in 2024 and 2025 as several incidents demonstrated some of our colleagues suffer from severe workplace distress that is not being addressed. Unfortunately, it took crises such as a lawsuit filed against AFP and alerts from the labor inspector for management to finally respond. SUD respected the confidentiality of the audit process throughout to ensure its successful completion. Now that it has been finished and published, the audit's conclusions merit serious debate and, most of all, action.

Management's failing grades

The figures compiled by Sextant are damning: 45% of the survey respondents do not have confidence in AFP's management. This is not "a small band of negative and toxic voices" like our Global News Director thinks. This is the view of staff, and it deserves to be taken into account! Here are some of their other views: 48% do not understand the company's strategic choices; 60% do not trust management to prevent psychosocial risks related to organizational changes; and 70% state that the impacts are insufficiently considered upstream during organizational changes. As a reminder, this survey was conducted last summer, before the CEO's detailed cost-cutting plan was presented. Does anyone think that after the proposal to dismantle the expatriation system, staff cuts and reductions in short-term contracts have improved management's grades?

As part of the early retirement incentive plan, management agreed with unions on evaluations by an expert to ensure that non-replaced departures do not lead to workplace stress and suffering. However, the survey conducted before these departures revealed **an already serious situation: workplace stress, excessive working hours, chronic understaffing...** It's simple math: the situation could not have improved with the reduction in fixed-term contracts and the job freezes and cuts. Another finding of the audit: management is incapable of assessing each employee's workload and has, to date, made no attempt to find out. How can they claim to monitor the workload shift under these conditions and then later assert that the reforms have not had a negative impact on work?

Growing job insecurity for employees

The second phase of the audit by Sextant was based on interviews conducted between July and December 2025. Sextant found "a climate of uncertainty regarding the future of AFP following the CEO's announcements." It's clear that since the dramatic announcement of cost-cutting measures, no one can claim job security anymore. This is especially true for temporary employees, whose pleas for help have gone unanswered by an inflexible management that even boasts about its handling of their situation! But according to Sextant, job security isn't just about losing it. It also encompasses the deterioration of working conditions following numerous reorganizations, the loss of meaning in work, the lack of career advancement opportunities, and the uncertainty

surrounding AFP's future. It's easy to accuse the unions of being negative and toxic, when it's management that has, through relentless video messaging and obsessive repetition, constructed in our minds a world where journalism and AFP are on the verge of extinction!

It is easy for management to accuse the unions of fueling division, but this external study demonstrates that the Agency is riddled with social fractures that have never been healed. Division is everywhere: between journalists and support staff; between production services and the desks; between text, photo, and video journalists; between headquarters and local staff. These divisions have repeatedly served management, which continues with a barely concealed desire to individualize wages, mobility conditions, and even career paths. The crucial task of the unions is precisely to bring together disillusioned employees, regardless of their status!

Corrective or merely decorative measures?

SUD has immense respect for the work done by Sextant and is pleased that we have its findings printed black on white. However, as we repeatedly pointed out while the audit was still being carried out, its recommendations are based upon an assumption we do not share: that improvements in protecting employee health can be made while maintaining management's reorganization methods! **SUD believes that we cannot have it both ways: protect employee health while constantly destabilizing them.** There's no point in talking about "passionate jobs" when management uses that to normalize aberrant practices. The resilience of employees, already severely tested by several years of increasing efforts without above-inflation pay increases, has its limits! We cannot contort ourselves with performative listening that changes nothing. The audit not only identifies not only the sources of suffering but its health consequences: stress, anxiety, sleep disorders, exhaustion, burnout.

Everything suggests that management is prepared to sidestep this fundamental issue and content itself with picking and choosing from Sextant's ideas. SUD already sees management's priorities: employee performance evaluations and the professionalization of managers. A familiar refrain we've already heard in mobility meetings. Indeed, the lucky recipients of "enhanced" mobility are none other than the managers! While promising professionalization, management is only seeking to create a new divide between managers and everyone else.

We were struck by one element revealed by the audit: while risks to employee health were primarily caused by management's reform projects, employees were relying upon one another for support. Some 93% of respondents stated that their colleagues are available if needed, and 90% feel recognized by their peers. Employees are loyal to AFP because they identify with its public service mission. This helps them find meaning in their work, find a sense of belonging that binds them to AFP despite the difficulties. **Nowhere in this report do we find any indication that employees feel motivated, let alone "empowered," by management and its actions. Under these circumstances, SUD calls on management to draw the necessary conclusions and assume its responsibilities.**

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SUD-AFP (Solidarity, Unity, Democracy)

