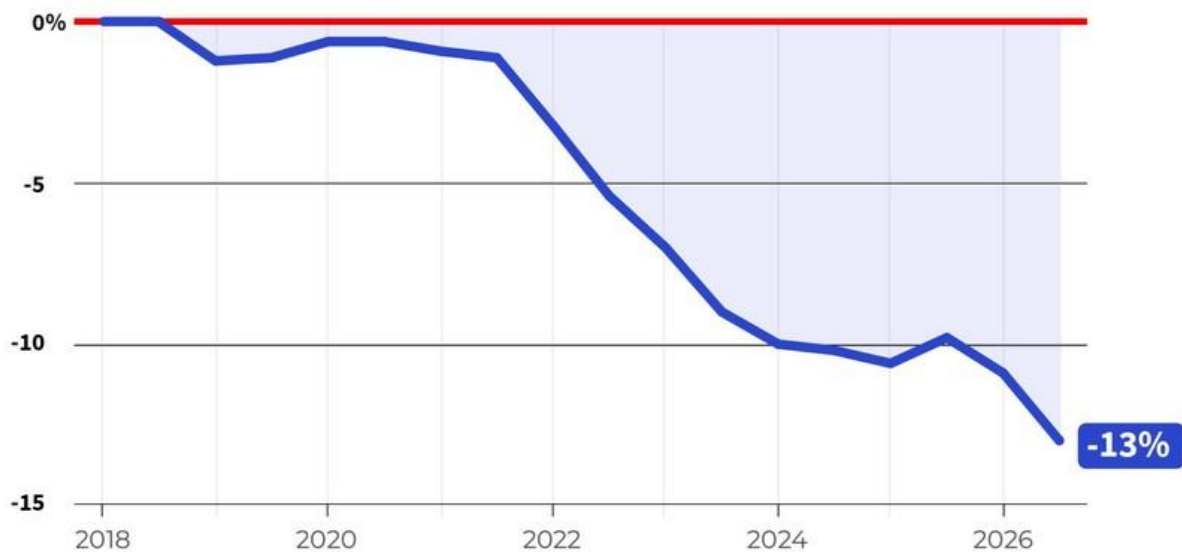


## -13% purchasing power Thanks boss!



● Loss of purchasing power ● Inflation adjusted purchasing power

**The minimum wage (SMIC) will increase by 2.4% on June 1st, following the rising inflation rate amid the conflict in the Middle East. And what about our AFP salaries? Unfortunately, no increase is expected given the financial straitjacket imposed upon the Agency. But as the graphic above demonstrates, this situation can't continue without staff facing financial peril. Some will undoubtedly argue that this a necessary "effort" by staff to keep AFP afloat, but Sextant's social audit suggests that the agency risks buckling under the weight of psychosocial risks.**

Most leaders want to leave their mark. In this respect, our CEO has certainly succeeded: the development of the video service will count among his achievements. But his true legacy, SUD believes, lies elsewhere – and it carries significant consequences: a sharp decline in the purchasing power of AFP employees. Since 2018, our wage scales have lost nearly 13% from the level they would have been if adjusted for inflation alongside the minimum wage, creating an unprecedented gap. After Hoog trashed our collective bargaining agreements, Fries has emasculated our wage scales.

How did we arrive at a 13% loss of purchasing power? The figures speak for themselves. In 2018, the starting salary for journalists, including bonuses, was 1.79 times the minimum wage (SMIC). In June, it will fall to 1.56 times the SMIC. A sharp drop!

However, the SMIC (more or less) keeps pace with inflation – it's the minimum protection for the most vulnerable. As a result, our pay scales are falling behind. The difference between 1.79 SMIC and 1.56 SMIC represents our net loss. It's the Fries Gap.

In concrete terms, an entry-level journalist at AFP would need to earn nearly 15% more today simply to be at the standard of living of his or her colleague who started in 2018. That represents more than €433 gross per month. For an entry-level journalist! And €433 is more than the increase at each step up the entire journalists' pay scale – with one exception: the passage from RED7 to RED8 (editor-in-chief).

### **86 cents... above the minimum wage**

The situation is similar for all staff categories. But that of press employees (EP) is the most revealing – and the most worrying – because they are the lowest paid at AFP. As of June 1st, the minimum wage will rise to €1,867.02 gross per month. The starting base salary for EPs? €1,867.88. 86 cents more. That's where we stand.<sup>1</sup>

This isn't unprecedented. AFP has already fallen below the minimum wage for EPs and transmission workers (OTs) – as SUD has documented ([Happy May Day! AFP under minimum wage!](#) / [AFP still under minimum wage , Happy New Year 2024!](#)). And what is management doing about it? They aren't increasing salaries. They're dismantling the pay scales. Last year, a career path was eliminated for EP staff, and the entry-level coefficients for other career plans were also eliminated. The same was done to the OT career plan: the lowest rung was eliminated.

Imagine we are on a ladder while the tide of job insecurity is rising. AFP has removed the rungs at the bottom of the ladder. It is not pushing the ladder higher. It is not giving employees enough opportunities to climb the rungs.

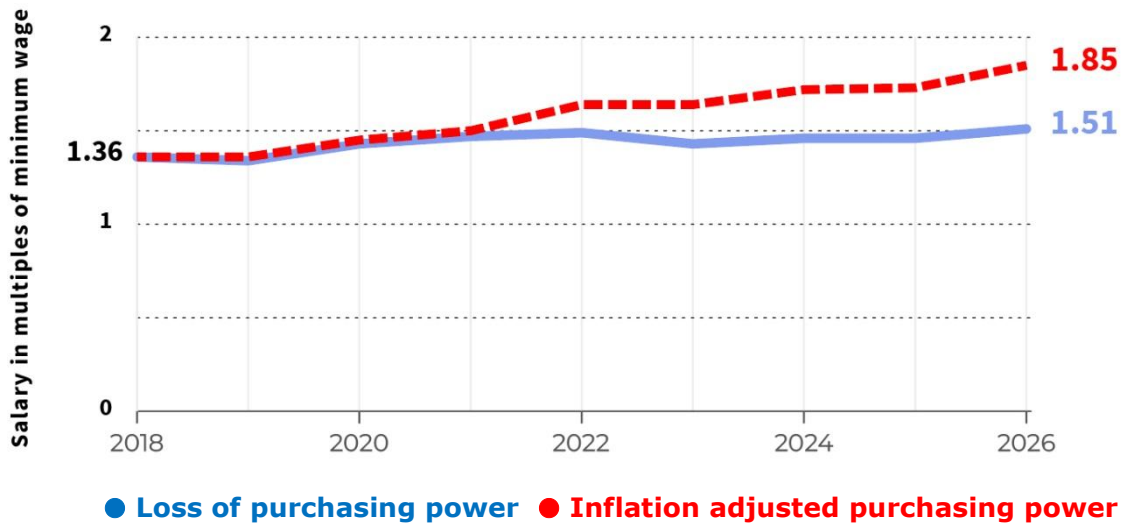
### **Running to stay in place**

The impact of this is more staggering over the long-term. Even where there are guaranteed promotions. Let's take the case of an EP who enters AFP in 2018 – the year Fries arrived at the Agency – at the then entry coefficient level of 140. Their salary is 1.36 SMIC. In 2020, the EP is promoted to coefficient 154, in 2021 the first seniority bonus applies. In 2022, another promotion to coefficient 169, then in 2024 another step up in seniority bonus and in 2026 another promotion to coefficient 183.

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<sup>1</sup> To be transparent: the comparison against SMIC excludes fixed bonuses, which represent nearly €500 more for the entry-level coefficient. This is the rule for the sector.

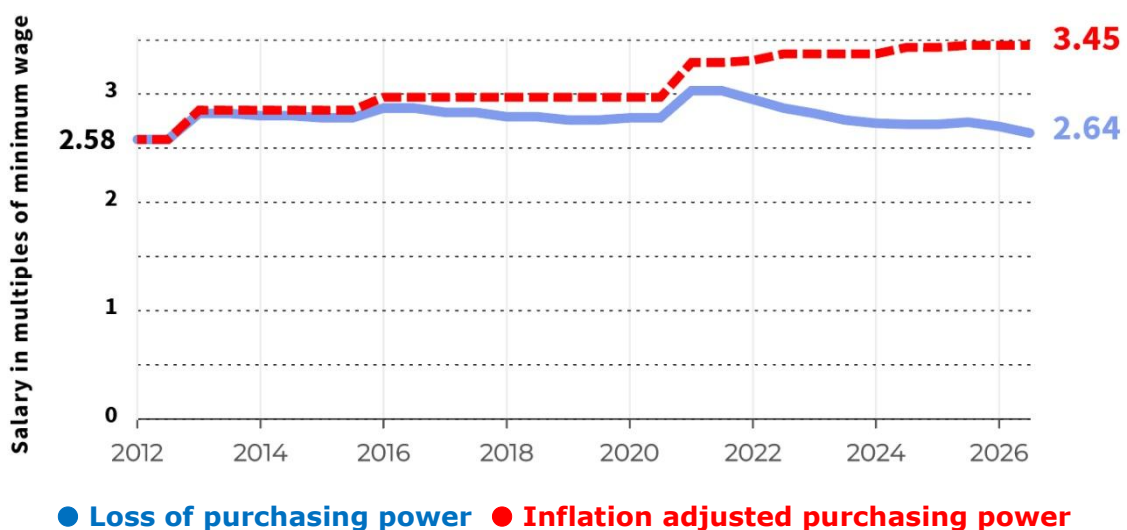
### Evolution of purchasing power of an EP hired in 2018



If salaries had been indexed to inflation – like the minimum wage – this employee's salary would have increased from 1.36 to 1.85 times the minimum wage. That's an additional €639.68 gross per month. This is illustrated in our second graph by the red dotted line. The blue line shows the reality. In 2026, the employee's salary only reaches 1.51 times the minimum wage. In other words, more than half of the potential gain has been lost. Their latest promotion and the increase in seniority bonus only brings them back to a little more than the 2022 level. Running to stay in place.

The situation is similar for journalists. We calculated the evolution of the purchasing power for a journalist who made category RED 5 (the highest guaranteed promotion under the career plan) in 2021.

### A journalist promoted to RED 5 in 2021 has less purchasing power now than when promoted to RED 4 in 2013



The graphic shows that management's failure to make regular cost of living adjustments means the journalist now has less purchasing power than when they were promoted to RED 4 in 2013. A promotion to RED 5+, which is totally at the discretion of management, would restore not even half of the purchasing power lost since the journalist was promoted to RED 5. This journalist is running but falling further behind.

In other words, if young employees maintain their purchasing power thanks to AFP's automatic career plan (20 years for journalists), they should afterwards expect an inevitable decline in their purchasing power... unless they become managers. In such cases, bonuses serve as a substitute for the salary increases they would otherwise be entitled to due to inflation. This mechanism is quite pleasing to management, as it allows them to create competition among employees who are subject to mobility, and to encourage them to become managers even though the associated bonuses are often unattractive compared to the workload and responsibilities.

Our CEO keeps telling us that AFP is well-off compared to other state-supported media outlets because we received 100% of the amount promised in our Aims and Means contract (COM). Perhaps that's true. But when we take inflation into account (in constant euros), we see that this support has fallen by 9% since Fabrice Fries arrived in 2018, even though in current euros it was an increase of 6%.

**We hear frequently that we need to make sacrifices. We have made a huge sacrifice already. Our CEO needs to present a strategy that doesn't rely upon our impoverishment. SUD has in recent years been "responsible" in its demands during annual wage talks, no longer systematically insisting upon a full cost-of-living adjustment. But now a change of course is necessary. We need a plan to rebuild the purchasing power of AFP's staff. That includes a general wage hike, improving career plans and adding seniority bonus levels.**

Paris, May 29, 2026

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

