

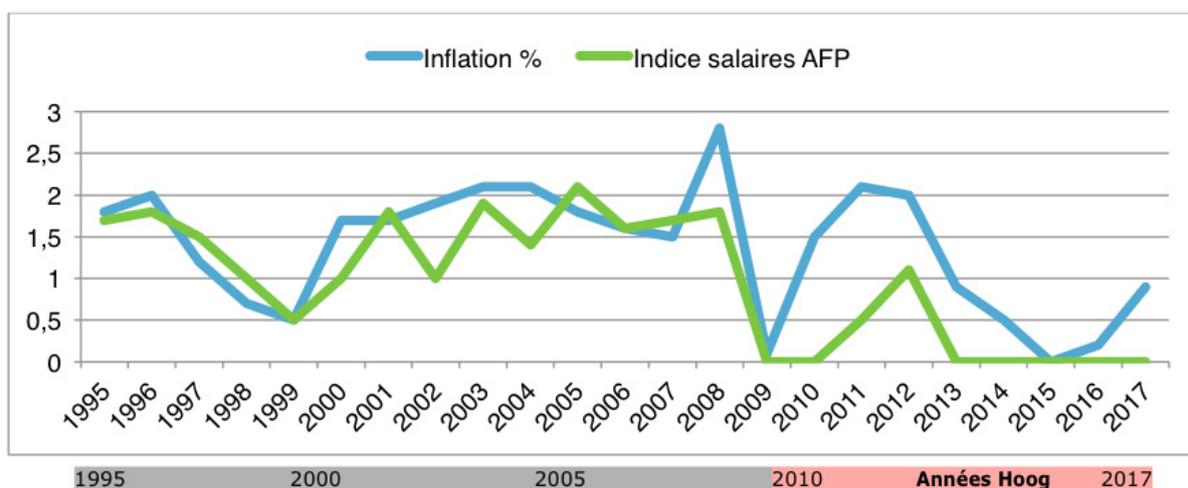
The infernal spiral

We don't like to fancy ourselves as a Cassandra, but SUD did warn that **after the Grand Accord there would be a new round of belt-tightening**, then another as the belt would need to be tightened again and again under the funding system imposed on AFP in 2015 by the CEO under pressure from the European Commission and the French government.

Everyone (or nearly so) understood that the recent court judgement against AFP to raise our salaries was nothing but a **pretext** for management to announce another turn of the screw on jobs and working conditions at the Agency. Hats off to the **Society of Journalists**¹ which responded quickly and forcefully to the **threatening statement issued by management**².

SUD, like any trade union that seeks to defend labor conditions, welcomes the SPQN ruling by the Paris superior court that orders AFP implement **raise our base wages by 1.4 percent**. During a period when management has frozen our wage scales, the court said AFP should have raised our wages in 2013 and 2014, and awarded us back pay.³

For employees in France, **the gap between inflation and our wage scale is 6.5 percent since 2010**, according to a calculation recently made by SUD that management did not dispute.⁴ **Each of us has lost thousands of euros in purchasing power** during the two terms as CEO of Emmanuel Hoog, who has always refused to respond to the legitimate question about the evolution of his pay.⁵



A final victory in the SPQN case will allow employees to recapture 1.4 of the 6.5 percentage points in purchasing power they have lost. Management has put the cost of complying with the judgement at 6 million euros (gross, including charges) to cover back wages and then 1.4 million per year. This is evidently too much in the eyes of management and the "leading union of the profession in France as at AFP", which stated that it considered the lawsuit brought by the CGT, FO and SUD "adventurous".⁶

¹ In French : « Le contentieux "SPQN" ne doit pas être un prétexte », SDJ, 12-12-2017, Intranet link <http://u.afp.com/4FGt>

² In French : « Communiqué de la direction sur le contentieux SPQN », 11-12-2017, Intranet link <http://u.afp.com/4FNU>

³ See the text of the ruling (in French) : <http://u.afp.com/4Czt>

⁴ "Wages, purchasing power : Mr. Hoog's unkept promises", SUD-AFP, 10-10-2017 <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article479>

⁵ In French « Lettre ouverte à Emmanuel Hoog, PDG de l'AFP », CFE-CGC/FO/SUD, 9-11-2017 - <http://u.afp.com/4VdT>

⁶ Statement by SNJ-AFP, 13-12-2017 - <http://snj-afp.org/?p=302>

In the appeal that management has announced it intends to pursue, SUD will of course ask that the ruling by the Paris superior court be confirmed on the **increase of our base wages**. We will also request the appeals court overturn the part of the ruling that did not recognize the regular **re-evaluation of primes** on March 1 to account for increases in base wages. We believe management's abandonment of this practice was done illegally.

NAO 2017: no wage hike, no bonuses, no promotions

"The accounts are empty": that is the message given by management well *before* the SPQN ruling at the opening of the NAO -- the mandatory annual negotiations on wages. On December 14 management confirmed that in 2017 there will be neither primes nor promotions (beyond those required in the Grand Accord).

This meeting ended with the recognition of the failure of the wage talks, after a heated discussion between SUD and management during which the head of HR implicitly confirmed our analysis of the situation at the agency:

- **The 20.4 percent increase in staff costs since 2007** that management cited in its statement: this figure (an average of +2.04 percent per year) corresponds to what was **programmed by the state and management in the Aims and Means Contract (COM)**, in recognition of the fact that staff is the agency's main capital. It has nothing to do with excessive wages and benefits that are untenable or irresponsible demands by trade unions.
- The figure is for **global wage costs**: the wage costs for local and regional staff have increased much faster than those on HQ contracts (and which are now growing less than 1 percent per year).
- Management's figures also included **retirement incentives**, which are considerable given the age pyramid at the Agency and which shouldn't serve as a reason to cut benefits for the employees who remain.
- The figure also includes the costs of **tax compliance**. This means we haven't been getting wage increases because **we are paying for management's shenanigans**, in France and abroad (holiday pay settlement in 2011, expatriate pay, back tax settlements in numerous countries).

Wage freeze forever!

Management has been saying since the summer that it has to speed up its tax compliance abroad. It plans to step up switching the status of posts from HQ to local, which reduces the number of well-paid jobs and thus career opportunities for journalists.

With the help of the trade unions which signed the Grand Accord, **we now have a drop in days off to add to the drop in purchasing power**. Management is now threatening a **new turn of the screw** -- cuts which will hinder the Agency's ability to carry out its mission. Moreover, management **is incapable of leading us out of the morass it has led us into**.

Management's strategy is a failure. We need to force it to recognize that fact and consider other solutions (see the platforms for the **SOS-AFP list** candidates in the elections of staff representatives to the Board of Governors in the summer).⁷

The lawsuits that SUD has pursued are in the interest of staff as they seek to defend their benefits and encourage AFP to abandon illegal practices that only build up debts it will one day have to pay.

**AFP needs sufficient resources to carry out its public interest mission.
Don't accept their infernal spiral.**

Paris, 19 December 2017
SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)



⁷ <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article471>