

Equality in the workplace:

An unambitious accord



SUD, like several other trade unions at AFP, signed a new company agreement on equal opportunities and quality of life in the workplace¹. Here are the main points:

Parental leave

AFP agreed to pay fathers who take parental leave (maximum 11 consecutive calendar days) following the birth or adoption of a child. Previously, it was unpaid or people were encouraged to take RTTs or holiday. This is undoubtedly an added benefit, even if a small one, that will favor a better balance within families.

Positive discrimination

The accord states that: "If inexplicable gaps in wages are observed, the signatories agree that women may be overrepresented (by number and amount) in bonus and promotion rounds." Given that management refuses to improve automatic career plans -- the most effective mechanism to ensure all employees are treated equally -- this measure could in theory prove useful. In practice it is as empty as the envelope dedicated to bonuses and promotions last year -- €0!

Assisted part time

The accord renews this program which permits certain seniors to work less in their final three years, with the drop in pay cushioned, such as working at 80% of full time while receiving 90% of their salary. However experience has shown that this program -- which we supported -- contains traps and employees need to be fully informed before signing up. If you are interested in this program, feel free to contact us.

Quality of life

The accord contains a long section on the "right to disconnect" with "recommendations" made to employees. It is good to call attention to this right as well as the necessity of finding a proper work-life balance. But this verges on demagoguery given the brutal reductions in time off imposed under the Grand Accord and non-replacement of staff forcing the rest of us to work more intensively for longer hours.

A better deal only possible with your support

The equal opportunities and quality of life in the workplace accord was negotiated as an extension of the 2017 NAO, the mandatory annual wage talks. These ended in failure: a sixth year of no general wage increases (and no bonuses and promotions).

The ambitious title of the accord is in stark contrast to its disappointing content. It doesn't contain any cuts to benefits, unlike the Grand Accord of March 2017, the signature of which by the top two unions at AFP demoralized staff and destroyed the ability of trade unions to take joint action.

Nevertheless, like the recent measures to improve the visibility of women in AFP copy², the intentions of the new accord are good. They align with *our engagements to fight against all forms of discrimination and sexual violence, to promote sexual equality and achieve social progress*. That is why we signed, even if it wasn't with enthusiasm.

To make real progress on equality as well as quality of life in the workplace serious measures are needed: a return to general wage hikes, improvements to automatic career plans, reducing working hours, hiring... But the truth is, if we don't push for better working conditions we won't ever get them.

The social advances and women's rights that we enjoy are the result of decades of struggle. That is something that should be remembered in the coming days:

- **March 8**, International Women's Day.
- **Demonstrations** and strikes against the government's anti-social policies to defend public services, social rights and call for more just distribution of wealth.

¹ Text of the accord: <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article490>

² Cf. <http://u.afp.com/ow7J>