

Stop Plan Fries!



A synopsis of our analysis:

"The destruction of AFP is underway"

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No possible alternatives?

No more subsidies for *investments*. Shortfalls of public and commercial revenue directly linked to our public interest mission. Choked by the weight of its *debt*. AFP is in a straightjacket that leaves only one option: *limiting the growth of operating costs – i.e. spending on wages – and a full court press on raising international revenue*. This is the remedy that every CEO these past decades has tried to administer upon the Agency, with varying success: if wage growth has been slowed, revenue growth has never met aspirations.

The Fries Plan continues down the same road: the increase in revenue is expected to come from images rather than text, as well as a "*new generation of products*" which one can only wonder to what extent they will fall under our public interest mission. This is the uncertain part of his plan (if he obtains funds from the French state to carry it out).

The part that is more certain can be achieved, at least from an accounting standpoint, concerns wage costs. **After the Hoog Plan** (the "Grand Accord"), **now the Fries Plan**.

The CEO has already set the terms of the discussion about this aspect of his plan. During an appearance before lawmakers on October 16, Mr Fries said he is "open to discussion" with trade unions, but insisted on the need to cut costs. "*The inviolable objective for me is to have savings at the end ... if there are other methods to arrive there -- which is what the trade unions say - other than 125 job cuts, the door is open to discussion,*" he said according to an AFP report.

For Mr Fries the financial objectives of his plan are not negotiable; the means of achieving them are: he says to staff and their representatives that they can *choose between job cuts or cuts to their benefits (and maybe even wages)*. One can imagine the chaos of deal-making and back-stabbing this will unleash between the different professional categories. **Divide and rule!**

As with the Hoog Plan, **the Fries Plan gives us a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea**, as long as we resign ourselves to the fact that the strategic objectives of the plan as well as their justification cannot be challenged.

- **Should we demand more from the government for AFP?** - Yes, of course.
- **Will Mr Fries backtrack on the strategic objectives of his plan?** – No, of course not. Because *the roadmap that Mr Fries is using is the same as that of the Macron-Philippe government; it was published in Brussels and all of the oligarchy share it.*
- **Can AFP be saved?** – The amounts in play are small. What is €100 million euros of AFP's debt and investment needs compared to the state budget and the billions in tax breaks awarded to the rich or allowed not be paid via "tax optimization" every year?
- **Should AFP always increase its commercial revenue?** – Yes, once the political choice has been made prohibiting the state from financing the Agency's investments into its technological and overall modernization. No, according to the Agency's founding principles and its 1957 statute. Should a public hospital should generate revenue? Yes, when the state is tightening the belt, forcing the hospital to finance its own investments. No, when public officials consider that the *raison d'être* of a hospital is to treat patients. The same goes for AFP, whose *raison d'être* consists of providing information in the public interest and not *making money*.

- **Should AFP lower its tariffs in France?** – Yes, if you consider that France is a “free and fair” market. No, if you consider that – freed from the constraints imposed by Brussels – the French state should *completely revise its aid to the press*. Aid should be distributed upon the condition the beneficiaries *respect ethical and social objectives* and that they *pay a fair price for AFP’s services*, which are also subsidized as part of the Agency’s public interest mission.
- **Would additional state support erode AFP’s independence?** – Yes, for the purists of liberalism who consider each euro provided by the French state is one euro too much. No, if the Agency demonstrates on a daily basis that it acts in the public interest and that one of the fundamental principles of the 1957 statute still operates: *the one who pays does not decide*.

Overview and conclusions

AFP was brought into being by the political will of France’s post-war leaders – including a unanimous vote by lawmakers – **and it has long been considered one of the gems of the French state**. Like that of the public education system, child care, hospitals and health insurance, employer-funded pension system, rail system and others...

Today, it is becoming more and more clear that we cannot satisfy all of our social, cultural, democratic and environmental needs without breaking with the political and financial logic which aims to destroy our collective achievements in favor of private interests motivated by profit.

But who outside of the Agency knows that it is the process of being sold off, transformed into an object that is appetizing for financial interests?

SUD calls on staff to resist the Fries Plan:

Because without sufficient staff and resources AFP won’t be able to act in the public interest. SUD refuses to choose between cutting jobs or benefits and will do everything to demonstrate as clearly as possible the dangers the plan poses.

Because everyone at AFP understands that the Fries Plan is destructive, that it doesn’t provide a credible offer of light at the end of the tunnel.

Because the austerity called for by the Fries Plan isn’t justified: it is the product of a political strategy. The French state must fully compensate the cost of our public interest mission (MIG), *retroactively and in the future*. The French state should also absorb AFP’s debts and underwrite its investments, *even if that means breaking Brussels’ noxious rules*.

Because we reject an AFP deformed by the Fries Plan: *text* should remain at the heart of our service, because above all it is our text service which allows us to verify whether AFP is still acting in the *public interest* or serving private interests, whether that be via advertising, promotion or propaganda.

Because a different balance of power is necessary: staff and trade unions need to overcome their differences, to come together and present a united front to resist the Fries Plan. We have formidable adversaries: the CEO of the Agency, the French government, the European Commission, our main competitors which revel in our difficulties and the financial groups waiting to swoop in to snap up profitable activities. But we also have allies in those who also resist the current political and economic dogma, as well as citizens who value a *pluralist and complete source of information that is independent of political and financial forces*.

To learn more read our analysis of the Fries Plan and its objectives:
« The destruction of AFP is underway », here: <http://u.afp.com/oKVm>

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SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)

Sud
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE