

Télétravail negotiations:

Management advances by backpedaling!



Who would dare to say today that télétravail does not work at AFP? A majority of employees want this hybrid mode of working and the Agency is none the worse for it. It could therefore be reasonably expected that the renegotiation of the 2020 agreement on télétravail would be an opportunity to make improvements. Management, however, has just backpedaled its proposals, only weeks before the current agreement expires at the end of June. Is it adding pressure to sign a deal or is it seeking to derail the discussions? Are we all going to go back to working from home just one day a week? SUD takes stock of the situation.

After more than a month of sluggish discussions, management finally came out of the woodwork on May 10, suggesting points of convergence after unions had expressed their positions. If it said no to 20 "floating" days per year demanded by some, in addition to the usual two days of télétravail per week, management agreed to 10 of these "floating" days to deal with "unforeseen" events such as transport problems, water leaks, closed daycare centers, etc..

Management also supported SUD's proposal for additional flexibility by allowing more teleworking for employees working late hours, or on weekends and public holidays.

Trade unions also discovered with surprise a proposal from the management granting the right to employees to work remotely five or even 10 consecutive days (with the agreement of their supervisor). Management even noted this would allow employees, for example, to spend a week with distant family and/or to leave outside the school vacation period to buy "cheaper plane tickets".

Quite a step forward... but a short-lived one. Because at the next meeting, on May 31, we got a cold shower.

Flexibility or supplication?

While affirming it was returning with "advances", management in fact backpedaled. After "consultations with department heads", management refused the request by unions to let employees take these 10 "floating" days by just notifying their supervisor as one would take a sick day. Instead, the supervisor will have to give their authorization, even if the employee does not have a train that day or if the daycare center of the youngest is suddenly closed...

SUD's proposal for additional télétravail for late shifts and weekends? Refused too! On the grounds that some services are already unofficially doing this. So, no need to formalize it with an agreement! In other words, each employee will be able to continue to beg for additional days from their manager. With all the risk of the discrimination and blackmail (*if you don't do that, you won't have any extra days*) that one can imagine.

Management highlighted, a bit hypocritically in our view, the need to stay on a "common basis of two days of télétravail per week" so as not to "create too many

differences" between categories, in particular between journalist editors (who could easily télétravail more than two days) and reporters... This could become a "brake on mobility", according to management. As if jealous reporters will seek to go to the desks, or deskers decide to stay there, to have more weekends and late nights working from home...

Following the same reasoning, management decided to exclude all journalists from its proposal for five or 10 days of télétravail in a row. If it's impossible for reporters, we can't let deskers do it! As a result, only technical and administrative staff will be entitled to it... What a concept of fairness!

In addition, management announced that it had reviewed its list of posts ineligible for télétravail and, surprise, for the first time journalists appear on it: photo reporters. The reasoning: they spend all their time in the field. Not only is this not correct, but this is also a worrying argument as it could easily be applied to other reporters, in particular video journalists.

Finally, management indicated that department heads would be able unilaterally decide that this or that position is not allowed to télétravail! This deal begins to resemble buying a pig in a poke.

Meager advances

Unfortunately, the meager advances obtained elsewhere won't compensate for these reversals by management.

On the compensation for télétravail expenses, management is offering €1.50 per day of teleworking within the limit of €120 per year (sum reached as soon as an employee actually does two days of telework per week, i.e. approximately 80 days per year). The sum is modest when you consider that French companies can reimburse more than five times that amount without paying social contributions and taxes. It appears that there is more appetite to battle management for a good wage hike to compensate for inflation in annual salary talks later this year.

No big gain either on money for equipment to work at home (additional screen, chair, etc.): the allocation will rise from €200 currently every 5 years to €250.

As for the four-day work week, management is ready to study this possibility for employees not eligible for télétravail and not eligible for the forfait jour contract (just certain technicians and office employees), but there is no guarantee it will conduct an experiment.

We've still got a long way to reach an agreement – we don't even have a draft text yet – but not much time before the current agreement expires on June 30. As it stands, SUD is not ready to sign a deal if management persists in its inconsistencies and in its desire to grant supervisors omnipotence to decide who can télétravail or not. Our well-being depends upon it!

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SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)

