

French mobile operator SFR plans to cut staff level by over third: unions

August 2 2016



SFR, France's second-largest mobile operator, currently employs 14,000 people

French mobile operator SFR plans to shed over a third of its staff over the next three years although no forced job cuts are foreseen until 2019, union representatives said Tuesday.

"Management accepted that until 2019 there won't be any forced job cuts ... everything will be voluntary," said Abdelkader Choukrane of the

Unsa union, the largest at SFR, after a meeting with Labour Minister Myriam El Khomri.

He said management confirmed during a meeting on Monday the target of reducing head count by at least 5,000. France's second-largest operator currently employs 14,000 people.

The company was bought in 2014 for more than 17 billion euros (\$19 billion) by French-Israeli businessman Patrick Drahi, whose Altice holding company went on to buy US cable operator Cablevision for \$17.7 billion last year.

An agreement on no forced job cuts agreed during SFR's purchase expires in July 2017, and Drahi said in June the operator is "over-staffed".

SFR and employee representatives met Tuesday with El Khomri. With unemployment hovering just under record highs and elections approaching next year, the French government is keen on limiting [mass layoffs](#).

The company's management has confirmed it is in talks with union representatives but has not commented publicly on the number of job losses envisaged.

Isabel Lejeune-To, head of the CFDT-F3C [union](#), confirmed the current proposal would avoid forced [job cuts](#) until 2019, but warned that "if the text that is on the table is not signed, the [management](#) will be free to do as it sees fit."

Choukrane said the voluntary departure terms available under a 2012 agreement would be extended. Employees accepting to leave receive up to three months pay.

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Citation: French mobile operator SFR plans to cut staff level by over third: unions (2016, August 2) retrieved 5 May 2024 from

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