

BuzzFeed to shut French website

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US news website BuzzFeed is to shut down its French version after four years online, staff told AFP on Thursday.

All 14 staff at BuzzFeed France, which like its US equivalent publishes both [viral content](#) such as quizzes and traditional news stories, are set to lose their jobs, two of them said.

The French site's chief editor Stephane Jourdain blasted the "brutal and completely unexpected" decision in a Twitter post, saying BuzzFeed France had just enjoyed "four great months in terms of news and traffic".

One staffer said the news had been announced to the Paris team by Scott Lamb, BuzzFeed's New York-based head of international growth.

A spokeswoman at BuzzFeed's US headquarters declined to confirm the closure, saying: "We are taking steps to reconsider our operation in France given the uncertain path to growth in the French market."

She added: "We have begun a consultation process with BuzzFeed France and will follow up when we have more information to share."

BuzzFeed launched in the United States in 2006 and has since become a major international media player.

Initially best known for its light-hearted viral content, it has gone on to hire veteran journalists around the world to develop its serious [news](#) coverage.

BuzzFeed France launched in 2013 and "was right in the middle of a period of growth and investment," one staffer said.

"Traffic was going out and the site has published its biggest scoops in 2018," they added, notably allegations of systematic discrimination against Arab customers at a Paris restaurant favoured by celebrities like Kim Kardashian.

The site also recently ran scoops on the far-right National Front backing candidates that it knew had made extremist statements, and on sexual harassment allegations at television station TNT.

BuzzFeed had announced late last year that it was sacking around 100 people from its US and British operations, in an earlier sign that its advertising-dependent model was in trouble.

US media had reported in November that BuzzFeed had dropped plans to launch on the stock exchange for the immediate future, worried that its failure to meet ambitious growth targets would scare off investors.

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