



What does it mean to be a member of SOLIDAIRES ?



Introduction

In France, the trade union environment is divided and difficult to grasp. This is especially true when it comes to the Customs administration. Despite its small size, there are 8 national trade unions, which is a lot. It is the smallest administration that is not under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior.

The French tax administration (Direction Générale des Finances Publiques – DGFIP), with approximately 100,000 agents, only has 4 representative trade unions, which are, in decreasing order of representativeness: SOLIDAIRES, CGT, FO and CFDT.



1 – Representativeness of trade unions

Representative trade unions

The Customs administration (Direction Générale des Douanes et Droits Indirects – DGDDI) has 5 “representative” trade unions, which means they muster enough votes (10%) to take part in official bodies meetings.

They are, by alphabetical order:

- La Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT).
- La Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT).
- Force Ouvrière (FO).
- SOLIDAIRES, the only trade union that, alone, is representative in all three public service categories (A, B and C) in the joint administrative committees (Commissions Administratives Paritaires – CAP). Moreover, SOLIDAIRES being the first federation of the Ministry, is the majority union in ministerial bodies, including in departmental social action councils (Conseils Départementaux d’Action Sociale – CDAS).
- L’Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes (UNSA).

Other trade unions

The Customs administration has 3 “auxiliary” trade unions.

- Thus, to maintain its representativeness, the CFDT union joined forces with the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (CFTC) since the 2019-2022 mandate.
- FO and UNSA unions likewise joined forces with 2 senior management trade unions: the Syndicat National des Cadres des Douanes (SNCD) and the Confédération Générale des Cadres (CGC).



2 – Suffering or choosing ?

Unity is strength

Beyond official bodies which have a mandatory consultative role, the weight and influence of each trade union are closely related to the number of its supporters, whether they are sympathizers, members or activists.

There are many dangers

This is particularly important at a time when Customs remains a fragile institution that is regularly threatened with job cuts, closure of offices and stations as well as Revenue offices and maybe Regional Directorates in the future.



I – What SOLIDAIRES Douanes is

Why then joining a trade union in particular rather than another? Nowadays, what are the differences between them? Why choosing SOLIDAIRES Douanes rather than the other ones?



1 – An independent union

SOLIDAIRES DOUANES is not affiliated with any political party or institution.

A – Financially independent

It is strictly independent and gets most of its operating means from membership fees, unlike all other trade unions.

Moreover, expenses and revenue are managed directly at the professional level, and not at the interprofessional one.

B – Structurally independent

At interprofessional level, SOLIDAIRES DOUANES does not belong to a confederation (which is what the first “C” stands for in “CFDT”, “CFTC”, “CGC”, “CGT”), but it is a member of an association of free trade unions: L’Union syndicale SOLIDAIRES.

It brings together trade unions from all professional fields but each of them maintain its functional autonomy (including the finance!).

At interprofessional level, the central body of SOLIDAIRES coordinates and makes proposals, and the member unions decide.

C – Rooting

L’Union SOLIDAIRES is relatively new, which explains local differences. However, where SOLIDAIRES unions exist, they quickly become essential!

Thus, at the Ministry of Economy, SOLIDAIRES Finances Publiques (from the DGFIP) and SOLIDAIRES CCRF and SCL (from the DGCCRF, Direction Générale de la Concurrence, de la Consommation et de la Répression des Fraudes – General Directorate for Competition Policy, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control) became majority unions.

Elsewhere, we can mention here, among others, SOLIDAIRES Météo, majority union at Météo France, or the SNJ (Syndicat National des Journalistes), the most important union in journalism.



2 – An alternative trade union

A – Our values

We follow a guiding line, setting an example and believe in strong principles:

- Authenticity (simplicity, sincerity, comprehensibility, clarity),
- Tenacity (technicality, combativity),
- Honesty (in both senses of the word : objectivity and integrity).

B – Combativity

SOLIDAIRES DOUANES positions itself primarily as a union that defends the interests of customs officers.

We fight everyday to defend the missions and the network. They guarantee the real protection of society.

We do not hesitate to confront the senior administration with their lies or cowardice. They focus on their career path and can ruin life at work, conducting unfair evaluations, carrying out closure plans leaving agents (and their families!) in a difficult position.

C – Civic mindedness

For us, this position implies a political stance that we stand up for.

“Political” in the best and antique sense of the term (civic), and not “politician”, or in the sense of being linked to a party¹.

SOLIDAIRES DOUANES considers that a trade union worthy of the name can not effectively represent customs officers if it does not carry out analysis:

- concerning the profession of customs officer, its context and environment,
- intended for everyone.

We are sure that the struggle to improve working conditions will only be efficient when the customs administration will once again:

- be strong,
- be in line with the interests of the state and the people,
- have a future that is not jeopardized every other day by an ultra liberal politician in need of (bad) publicity.

¹ At the last legislative elections, the General Secretary of the UNSA Douanes union was running as Debout la France candidate. This party supported the Front National party at the second round of the presidential election in 2017.



II – Our convictions



1 – A republican union

SOLIDAIRES DOUANES vigorously defends a strong Customs service within the state.

In favor of a Customs service that regulates...

Several decades of ultra-liberalism and trade globalization have demonstrated immense damage coming from the dismantling of customs powers:

- Massification of dumping and trafficking.
- And its consequences:
 - deindustrialization
 - explosion of inequality
 - profits for organized crime.

We must not lose sight of big companies tax avoidance manoeuvres that results in the continuous decline of living standard of households while ever more enriching shareholders.

In favor of a Customs service with both its “surveillance” and “opérations commerciales” branches (field units and customs offices).

SOLIDAIRES DOUANES supports the fight against the flows of goods and capital that destabilize local economies, and deems necessary to strengthen the Customs missions:

- in matter of collection of duties and taxes
- and concerning the protection of citizens.

Therefore, we strongly affirm that maintaining both branches of the Customs service, each of them being an integral part of core business, is absolutely necessary.

A necessary inventory

The mess created by the undergoing set of reforms comes from the questioning of the role of the State. It is not a matter of fatality as some cynical and ephemeral Director Generals of Customs and slavish senior management would like us to believe.

Measures² undermine everyday work result from harmful political decisions diligently carried out by senior management that only aims at safeguarding its own interests (while the Customs were being broken up, they managed to create a body of Customs administrators, and to pocket the money that comes with it).

This is this mindset that we want to reverse.



2 – A union aiming at social progress

The consequences of all these measures are the reasons behind our fight: major drops in numbers, the closure of customs offices and units as well as Customs Revenue offices and probably Regional Customs Directorates in a near future. SOLIDAIRES DOUANES wishes to bring an end to the closure of Customs services across the country.

We are talking about lifting once and for all the Sword of Damocles that weighs on the majority of customs officers concerning the preservation of their workplace.

For a dense territorial network

Today, no customs officer has any guarantee about the preservation of his workplace, which puts him and his family in an unacceptable and precarious situation.

This endless race to centralizing the customs workplaces has become absurd.

Turning the accountancy network into an interregional one was presented to the customs officers as a positive measure, arguing that closure of regional Customs Revenue offices was the only way to keep an accounting customs service.

While this process was still underway, the announcement of the transfer/abandonment of tax assignments further weakened the customs accounting network (-95% of revenue recovered between 2018 and 2025) which demonstrates what SOLIDAIRES DOUANES has been claiming for years: the hyper-concentration of customs services does not strengthen this network but weakens it instead and makes it vulnerable.

For a fair and equal treatment

It is also necessary in order to improve the working conditions in a sustainable way. They deteriorate because of the precariousness of the profession. The senior hierarchy becomes obsessed with the results without bothering trying to understand what they mean, and they only carry out instructions written in advance.

Besides, the index point remains frozen and the RGPP has hindered careers development. SOLIDAIRES DOUANES is struggling every day, working in the field, with the colleagues, in CAP (Commissions Administratives Paritaires - Joint Administrative Committees) to eliminate any injustice and to help colleagues advancing their career.

While pressure and suffering at work kept increasing every year, wages relative to inflation kept dropping.

² Measures such as RGPP (Révision Générale des Politiques Publiques - General Review of Public Policies), MAP (Modernisation de l'Action Publique - Modernisation of Public Action), PSD (Plan Stratégique Douanier - Customs Strategic Plan), CAP22 (Comité Action Publique 2022 - Public Action Committee 2022), TMF (Transfert/abandon des Missions Fiscales - Transfer/abandonment of tax assignments).



III – What we do



1 – Denunciation of renunciations

To SOLIDAIRES DOUANES, the display of beliefs is not enough to make an effective trade union.

Missions / Locations

Customs trade unions will all protest against services closures. In 2014, however, 3 of them, CFDT, FO-SNCD and UNSA signed the so-called “social support” agreement which endorsed the entry into force of the PSD.

The same goes for April 2022 when CFDT, CFTC, CGT, FO-SNCD, UNSA and CGC all signed the transfer/abandonment of tax assignments agreement. Only SOLIDAIRES refused to condone it over time.

While the entire profession had massively mobilized to deny the entry into force of these measures aiming at destroying the customs services network, these trade unions broke the dynamics of protest against the vague promise of “beneficial” redundancy plan for the restructured staff. In reality though, they got nothing.

Many closures followed. No perspective has been drawn concerning long-term territorial network of customs services and the restructured staff had to deal with refusals and delays concerning their compensation payments (and the amounts are quite low!).

Career

In the same way, the draft agreement of the PPCR (Parcours Professionnels Carrières et Rémunérations – Career paths and remunerations) which was signed by a minority, CFDT, UNSA, CFTC and CGC unions, supposedly to enhance career development:

- did increase length of careers.
- endorsed the restrictive wage policy.



2 – A resolute struggle

Territorial coverage:

Against the forced closures

The policy aiming at signing everything to try salvaging some crumbs has thus not proven effective. Absolutely no gain at all. On the contrary, SOLIDAIRES has made a strong commitment to fighting at the presentation of the PSD and the TMF by pushing for the greatest possible mobilization to force the senior hierarchy to back down.

Even though the TMF agreement has been signed, we continue mobilizing energies towards refusing closures wherever possible by getting closer to elected officials and professional sectors. SOLIDAIRES tirelessly demands clear information concerning the customs territorial network.

The future /

the missions:

revealing the fraud

We believe that there is nothing worse than the concealment behind which often hides the senior administration in order to wear the agents out and to keep them in a state of denial of its detrimental projects.

SOLIDAIRES was the first union to disclose the contents of the CAP2022 projects about the Customs administration, forcing the senior hierarchy to speak out.

Careers:

officer trainees, a textbook case

Our fighting spirit and our struggle against all kinds of injustice has proven necessary when it came to stoutly fight the senior administration’s decision to deny tenure to numerous customs trainees.

Our refusal to back questionable cases supported by the senior administration led them to step back on almost all of them.



To conclude

SOLIDAIRES DOUANES commits to continue its work in the wake of what has been achieved the past years. **We are not unwilling to negotiate and open to dialogue (as we did before) but that would require a dependable basis**, without pre-determined results prior to any discussion. This was not the case with the PSD or the TMF.

The counter reforms undertaken by the Minister and the Director General of Customs keep the agents in the dark. There is therefore no alternative but to struggle. Since once again it appears that the customs missions will be undermined, SOLIDAIRES DOUANES will ferret out the truth, denounce the senior administration doublespeak and lead the fight to strengthen the customs service so that it can have a core role and be at the service of citizens.