

# Germany: Socialist Equality Party submits candidates for the European elections

**Our reporters**  
**6 March 2019**

On Monday, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) submitted the final supporting signatures to the Federal Returning Officer in Wiesbaden for its participation in the European elections. With 4,560 valid signatures, it has far exceeded the necessary number of 4,000, thus fulfilling all the prerequisites to appear on the ballot on May 26 with its 11 candidates throughout Germany.

The SGP's participation in the election is part of an offensive by the International Committee of the Fourth International against the growing nationalism in Europe. Together with its sister parties in France and Britain, the SGP is fighting for a socialist response to the capitalist crisis. "Only in this way can the relapse into fascist barbarism and war be prevented," says the SGP election statement.

"The great response we have received to our socialist perspective in collecting the signatures proves that workers are not prepared to accept the rightward shift of the establishment," said SGP chairman Ulrich Rippert. "All over Europe, fierce class struggles are breaking out. Now, it is important to arm the working class with a socialist programme."

The party collected a significant number of signatures during last week's strikes and outside countless factories where workers face mass layoffs and pay cuts. It was supported by workers because it criticized the nationalist and pro-business policies of the trade unions and promoted independent action committees.

For example, workers at Ford in Cologne are faced with radical job cuts, for which the IG Metall union bears full responsibility. Corporate headquarters, which paid out \$2.3 billion to shareholders last year, plans to eliminate 25,000 jobs in the coming months, most of them in Europe. Ford's General Works Council chairman in Europe, IG Metall official Martin Hennig, supports these business plans to "make Ford profitable."

SGP candidates also discussed with airport security workers how the unions are organizing a sell-out, while the workers are resisting it. Twenty-three thousand security personnel rejected the collective bargaining agreement that the Verdi union had negotiated, which fell far short of their demands.

In recent weeks, strikes and mass demonstrations have taken place in the public sector of the Länder (federal states) throughout Germany. In Berlin alone, tens of thousands of teachers and educators took part in these protest strikes in order to fight against the government's austerity and war policies and against ever-worsening working conditions in the neglected schools and overcrowded day-care centres.

SGP candidates discussed the link between public sector austerity and growing militarism, explaining that workers face political challenges. "The frantic attempts to prevent a joint strike of all public sector employees are part of the political agenda of the unions: they support the policy of the grand coalition government of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, and want to prevent a confrontation with the federal government," an SGP statement reads.

"Build independent action committees!" SGP candidate Andy Niklaus, a Berlin bus driver himself, addressed his colleagues. In February, in addition to the teachers' rallies, train, tram and bus drivers demonstrated, bringing the city of Berlin to a halt for half a day. Niklaus said in an appeal, "In the deepest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s, workers cannot defend their rights and win any improvements without breaking with the unions and taking the fight into their own hands."

Many workers supported the petition drive mounted by the SGP because it is the only party seriously opposing the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the return of fascism and war. In a statement commemorating the 100th anniversary of the murder of

Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, SGP lead candidate Christoph Vandreier said that the rise of fascism in Germany does not have a mass base, but “it is supported by the highest authorities so that it can be used against any form of opposition, as it was one hundred years ago. Under these conditions, the principles for which Luxemburg and Liebknecht fought today are again of major importance.”

The SGP received a particularly large number of signatures at Berlin’s Humboldt University, where its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, has been fighting for years against ideological preparations for war and the rehabilitation of right-wing extremist positions. In the student parliament elections in January, the IYSSE received over five percent of the vote. Many students knew of the SGP and signed its election petition because they regard it as a consistent opponent of the turn to the right.

SGP teams also collected signatures at several major protests and demonstrations, for example, a few weeks ago in Munich at the protest against the Munich Security Conference, and at rallies against the drowning of refugees in the Mediterranean, a direct result of EU policy and German refugee policy under Interior Minister Horst Seehofer.

The great interest in the perspectives of the SGP shows how important the European election campaign will be. The election statement declares, “Strikes and industrial action are resurgent throughout Europe ... The SGP gives this opposition a voice and perspective. We do not try to alleviate the symptoms of a diseased system but advocate the overthrow of capitalism. The return of fascism and war is the result of a deep crisis of the capitalist system. ... Only if the working class unites all over Europe and fights for the United Socialist States of Europe can disaster be prevented.”

We urge all WSWs readers to register today and support the SGP campaign.



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