

Deutsche Post DHL workers: Take the strike into your own hands

Postal Workers Action Committee
6 March 2023

Dear brothers and sisters,

We call on you to join our Postal Workers Action Committee, which is independent of the union, to prepare the upcoming strike. The Verdi union is not fighting for our legitimate demands but preparing a sellout.

Our strike is part of a European-wide movement of workers against the consequences of war, inflation and social and job cuts. Currently, 2.5 million public sector workers for the federal and state governments are struggling just like us against the reduction in their real wages. In March, they will be joined by over 200,000 rail workers. In France, millions are protesting against “pension reform,” and in the United Kingdom, hundreds of thousands are on strike against wage theft, job cuts and restrictions on the right to strike.

The value of our real wages has been falling for years. It was Verdi members who pushed through the 15 percent demand in the membership survey before the contract bargaining began. If we had let Verdi do things its way, the union would have demanded around 10 percent, as in their pay claim for federal and local government workers, and would now be accepting the offer from Deutsche Post with a few adjustments.

Deutsche Post calculates its offer is worth an average 11.5 percent wage increase. In doing so, it explicitly includes the government subsidised tax-free one-off payment of €3,000, which it wants to spread over a 24-month contract period. But when that money is used up, our wages will still be low, and the price increases will continue.

As far as basic wages go, we are not to receive a single cent more this year. Next year, an additional €150 per month (or 5 to 7 percent more) will be paid. In December 2024, there will then be a further increase of €190. While more than €2 billion in dividends will be

paid out to Deutsche Post shareholders again this year, there is supposedly no money for us to pay for our rents and groceries.

We have made it clear with our warning strikes and protests in recent weeks that we want to fight for our demands. But we must prepare ourselves for the fact that Verdi will do everything to prevent industrial action. The Verdi officials are bought-and-paid-for stooges of Deutsche Post.

Ten Verdi representatives sit on the Deutsche Post Supervisory Board, for which they are handsomely rewarded, receiving well over a million euros a year. Verdi’s chief negotiator Andrea Kocsis alone collected €264,000 as supervisory board deputy chairwoman in 2021. Last year, the basic remuneration for all 10 Supervisory Board members increased by a further €30,000. Verdi representatives pocket at least €5,000 to €7,000 a year of that—not including meeting fees, for which Kocsis received €19,000 in 2021 alone.

Kocsis, who also sits on the KfW Bankengruppe supervisory board, has also proven in the past that she and Verdi stand on the side of Deutsche Post.

The older ones among us still remember well the four-week strike of 2015. Back then, too, we were ready to fight. We wanted to prevent Deutsche Post from using the 49 branches of its subsidiary DHL Delivery to lower the overall wages level and worsen our working conditions.

Verdi shamefully sold out our strike back then. DHL Delivery’s regional companies, with their extremely low wages, remained in place. Nevertheless, Kocsis said at the time, “We are very satisfied with the deal.” Then four years later, in 2019, Verdi rapidly lowered entry-level wages for postal delivery workers, so that Deutsche Post no longer needed its low-cost subsidiary. Kocsis sold that as a “huge union success.”

Currently, new hires receive an hourly rate of only €12.60, which is slightly more than the minimum wage. Initially, they also did not receive annual bonuses and increments for the first three years. To this day, new colleagues do not immediately receive the same additional benefits as existing employees.

At the same time, workloads have increased to an almost unbearable level. In the past, we always had slightly lower mail and parcel volumes during the summer. In this “summer slump,” we recovered from the peak periods of autumn and winter. Now, the size of the workforce is simply reduced in summer so that workloads are kept high throughout. But in autumn/winter, relative to the rising volume of letters and parcels, there are not as many new hires as were cut in the summer, with the result that the workload is constantly increased.

Summer staff reductions are facilitated by increased staff turnover. Most of our new, young colleagues do not put up for long with back-breaking jobs paying only €12.60 an hour. Many only stay for a few weeks or months.

We owe this situation to the close collaboration between Deutsche Post management and Verdi. The top managerial posts are appointed by the Executive Committee of the Supervisory Board, on which Kocsis, among others, sits for Verdi. Since Klaus Zumwinkel took over the management of the privatized Deutsche Post in 1989, the CEOs have come from the management consultancy firm McKinsey. Even if Tobias Meyer, until now head of the mail and parcel business, takes over the post from Frank Appel in May, this will remain the case. Meyer—like Chief Financial Officer Melanie Kreis—originally came from McKinsey. Deutsche Post is really a “McKinsey branch.”

Verdi and Kocsis will do everything to prevent an all-out strike. For example, the strike ballot has been extended to two weeks so that unofficial talks can take place in the background. This is to prepare for a sellout. What new “success” are they concocting this time?

We propose that we organize ourselves independently in rank-and-file action committees in all distribution centres to control the ballot, prepare the strike and enforce our demands. These action committees must network centrally throughout Germany and be independent of the unions. This applies not only to Verdi, but also to the other trade unions, which are not

an alternative. The sectoral union DPVKOM, for example, had demanded a 12 percent pay increase for postal workers and has now spoken positively about Deutsche Post’s pay offer.

The action committees must organize all postal workers and, at the same time, see themselves as part of the European strike and protest movement. We need to reach out to our approximately 450,000 brothers and sisters in the other courier, express and parcel services, at Amazon, Hermes, UPS, Fedex, DPD, GLS, etc. They are usually worse off than we are as a result of subcontracting. Many of them are being cheated out of receiving even the minimum wage.

Our allies are also the 2.5 million workers who are currently covered by contract negotiations in Germany’s public sector, the 210,000 rail workers who are going into collective bargaining disputes in March, and finally all the workers who are fighting across Europe against the consequences of NATO’s escalation of its proxy war in Ukraine, as well as increased consumer prices. In Europe, inflation is over 10 percent, and many times that for food and energy.

European governments are spending hundreds of billions on rearmament and war, and we are being asked to pay for it—through social cuts as in France on pensions, with jobs and wage cuts as in the UK, Italy, Spain, here in Germany and many other countries.

We do not have much time left. The result of the ballot is to be announced on March 9. Only by taking action ourselves now and uniting independently can we defend our real wages and working conditions.

Share this appeal in delivery facilities and distribution centres, spread it through social media and messenger apps in your companies. Join our action committee and build action committees yourself in your workplace. Contact us and send a WhatsApp message to the following number: +491633378340.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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