

# Postal workers express anger at Verdi union as it recommends below-inflation pay offer at Deutsche Post

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The second pay offer by Deutsche Post, which service trade union Verdi is recommending for acceptance, has met with enormous anger and indignation among workers. Dozens who are repulsed by Verdi and want to take up real industrial action are contacting the Postal Action Committee every day. On Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok, the pay offer is generating bitter comments and sharp criticism.

Everyone agrees that the cloak-and-dagger action by Deutsche Post and Verdi last week was a set-up that only served to prevent a strike. Verdi had negotiated a supposedly new offer within a few hours.

Mike from Nuremberg has been a Verdi member for 25 years. “I’m really irritated now,” the delivery worker said. The union was now “praising the things they justifiably called sleight of hand in the first offer.” He showed a poster that Verdi had used to argue against Deutsche Post’s first offer, which read, “3,000 euros inflation compensation in 24 months is not a wage increase.”

He also remembers well how, just over two years ago, Verdi rejected a premium for working throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Stephan Teuscher, Verdi’s wage expert, and Andrea Kocsis, chief negotiator in the current round of collective bargaining, said at the time, “These one-time payments are used by the employer to justify pay freezes.”

Mike is angry: “They received a mandate to strike. And here they are refusing.”

Matthias, a letter and parcel deliverer in Heidenheim, has a similar view: “The strike would have put Deutsche Post in a bind. What a strike brings is only fought for in the strike.”

Outside the Berlin-Süd parcel centre in Ludwigsfelde, Brandenburg, supporters of the Postal Action Committee

spoke to many of the 600 or so workers on shift there on Monday evening. A very large proportion consists of Polish workers who are employed through outside companies and are therefore not subject to the collective agreement. Many knew about the third statement issued by the Postal Action Committee, which was read tens of thousands of times in the first two days. One worker, who had already read the statement, confirmed, “It’s all true, that’s exactly how it is.”

In addition to the miserable wage offer and cancelling the strike, the constantly worsening working conditions are a topic of discussion by many workers.

Olaf, a parcel delivery driver in Hamburg, describes how he is being saddled with more and more work. Currently, he is assigned to huge apartment blocks. “Seven floors, 10 apartments on one floor.” A lot of packages would go in there, which he delivers in several instalments, “up and down. Delivery hasn’t been what it used to be for a long time.”

Krzysztof from Bremen also reported on this. “I earn €2,500 gross, and after deducting taxes and social security contributions and the €1,200 for regular bills, I’m left with almost nothing. I can no longer pay the constantly rising cost of living with my salary. For example, last September my rent was increased from €540 to €600.” Some months, he said, he has only €400 to live on.

Krzysztof tells of the works meeting in Bremen, where colleagues demanded a 20 percent wage increase and the tax-free one-time payment of €3,000: “Verdi made 15 percent out of that and now only about 11 percent of that is to remain, over two years!”

Matthias from Heidenheim described it less formally: “We’re busting our asses and they’re cashing in.”

But it is not just the obvious unfairness between the poorly paid backbreaking work, especially of the delivery

staff, and the billions of euros for shareholders that generates resentment among postal workers.

Marco from Bavaria points to Verdi deputy chairwoman Andreas Kocsis: “She goes home with €250,000 a year. She doesn’t even know how we’re doing anymore. Many of us have €1,600 net per month. But she sits on the supervisory board with other Verdi representatives and drinks tea and wine with the representatives of capital.”

He recalls the difficult working conditions of the last three years. “I had coronavirus despite being vaccinated three times, and now I’m sick every now and then,” he said. He attributes this to his coronavirus illness. “And now I have to justify myself to the boss soon. That’s not about my health, it’s about me being beaten up because I’m sick.”

But at work, he said, you automatically get sick. “We’re becoming fewer and fewer, we used to be 220,000, now we’re only 160,000.” But the work is increasing, he said. “Many are quitting because the job is getting too hard. New ones coming into the job don’t stay as the pay is way too low.”

The money that is lacking for the workforce was being “squandered,” he said. “€100 billion for rearmament, if you distributed that to the 80 million people in Germany, we would be better off.” He was “absolutely against war.” “We could all—whatever colour—live in peace.” The developments of the last 10 to 15 years, he said, were frightening.

For many of the workers, Verdi’s apparent mockery of its own membership is the straw that broke the camel’s back. Social media is full of comments against Verdi and the offer they presented for acceptance.

On the main Verdi Facebook account, below the announcement of the offer, most of the more than 1,300 comments are directed against the offer. One of the most popular comments, with some 250 likes, is this one from Jana Wiechardt from Rostock: “I really can’t think of anything more to say about this. ... It boasts about an inflation premium but increases in basic rates only from 2024. ... I hope the employees realize that this is a deceptive package!”

The more than 300 comments under Verdi’s post on Instagram are also almost all against the offer. User reurnsburg writes: “Actually, there should be a real campaign from below now to discuss this, discuss the perspective for strike and reject the result.”

The same goes for the 150 or so comments under Verdi’s tweet on the deal. Jannik responds, “I hope this ‘result’ is rejected as hard as nails. That’s really a

cheek.”

Several address the fact that the sell-out at Deutsche Post has a direct—negative—impact on Verdi’s collective bargaining in the public sector at federal and local level.

Many declare that they will turn their backs on Verdi. But most of those the WSWS spoke to know that this can only be a first step. Outside the Berlin-Süd parcel centre in Ludwigsfelde, Brandenburg, on Monday evening, a lively discussion unfolded with René, André, Sabrina and Tekin about what needed to be done in the current situation. Everyone was in favour of a strike and agreed that it should be conducted jointly with workers in other sectors, especially in health care. There was also a unanimous opinion that the union would not lead such a struggle. This resulted in an animated discussion about the importance of the Postal Action Committee.

The last statement by the Postal Action Committee read:

Our dispute at the Deutsche Post is therefore of great importance. We face major struggles. Across Europe and internationally, a powerful movement is developing against the consequences of massive levels of inequality, the war in Ukraine and militarisation.

Verdi’s attempt to prevent the strike, it said, was to prevent that movement from spreading to Germany. Because “Verdi and the other trade unions dread a European-wide movement of workers—but it is precisely such a movement that is necessary to beat back the attacks on wages and working conditions.”

It is therefore crucial to reject the offer in the upcoming ballot and, at the same time, strengthen the Postal Action Committee. Verdi will do everything it can to prevent a strike, even if the offer is rejected. This is because, just like the corporations, it fears a European-wide working class movement. Postal workers must prepare to take the strike into their own hands and withdraw Verdi’s negotiating mandate.

Contact the action committee via WhatsApp message to +491633378340.



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