

# Bosch auto supplier in Germany: No end in sight to job losses

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16 February 2025

In December, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote about the onslaught against jobs, wages and working conditions at Volkswagen autos: “The executive’s declaration of war on the workforce heralds a turning point in social policy that affects more than just VW.” The Bosch company has now announced such a turning point—with a new wave of attacks on jobs and wages.

The auto division of Robert Bosch GmbH is the world’s largest auto supplier. The company also manufactures power tools, household appliances and products and components for energy and building technology.

Following massive job cuts and various other cost-cutting programmes over the past two years, the Bosch company employed just under 420,000 workers in 60 countries worldwide at the end of 2024. Last year alone, 11,500 employees lost their jobs worldwide, including 4,400 of the company’s 129,000-strong workforce in Germany.

Bosch has now announced further attacks. The preliminary business result for 2024 suggests sales of 90.5 billion euros, which would correspond to a maximum profit of 3.5 billion euros and a return of 3.5 percent. In 2023, profits stood at 4.6 billion euros and the return was 5 percent.

“I expect 2025 to be a challenging year,” said Bosch executive Stefan Hartung. In the same breath, he announced “painful decisions” for the workforce, but not, however, for the company owners. The company plans to at least double its profits from 2024 by 2026. This is difficult, but achievable, he said.

The company’s employees are expected to pay for the doubling of profit levels. In an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Hartung announced: “There will be further savings programmes—simply because there will be another major shift in the auto manufacturing complex by 2030.”

As this change is structural, it will inevitably continue over the next five or six years. Hartung refused to disclose the number of redundancies the company is planning.

Hartung had already made clear in an interview in March 2024, when he first announced the wiping out of 3,500 jobs in Germany, that there would be no end to the current attacks. “These are not final figures, but the orders of magnitude we consider necessary to close the competitive gap. At the end of the day, it’s about permanent cost reduction and increasing competitiveness, not headcount.” At the end of 2024, Bosch then announced plans to cut a further 12,230 jobs worldwide by 2026, including 7,000 at its German plants.

Hartung emphasised that this could only be achieved in close cooperation with the IG Metall union. “The system of social partnership (between management and unions) at Bosch,” he said, has “never before been burdened with such job cuts.” He indicated that Bosch intended to follow a similar path to VW.

At VW, IG Metall’s open alliance with the company is leading to the destruction of at least 35,000 jobs, a reduction in real wages of up to 20 percent and, sooner or later, plant closures.

Bosch is also cutting wages and salaries as well as jobs. The working hours of more than 10,000 employees are being forcibly reduced to 35 hours—without wage compensation. Most of those affected currently work 38 to 40 hours a week, meaning they may lose up to 15 percent of their gross salary.

IG Metall, in the past a reliable partner to management in the planning and implementation of staff reductions and cost-cutting programmes, reacted to the latest announcements with displays of public outrage and claims of ignorance about the plans. Bosch Mobility works council chairman Frank Sell, who is also deputy chairman of the Supervisory Board of Robert Bosch GmbH, complained that the works council was “only aware of the planned course of action in advance in hints and has now been presented with a fait accompli.” This is simply outright fraud.

Less than two years ago, in July 2023, at the presentation of a savings programme agreed with management, Sell declared euphorically: “Now employees at the Mobility sites can look forward to job security until 2027.”

“The works councils will now also be involved in strategic and economic planning at an early stage, for example with regard to the location of future products and the development of target plans,” Sell said. “In this way, we are shaping the future of the German mobility locations beyond 2027.”

The deputy chairman of the company Supervisory Board now claims to have been presented with a fait accompli and appeals once again for a revival of the old form of “social partnership” in which the trade union and the company jointly drew up cost-cutting plans, i.e., attacks on the workforce.

In their soapbox speeches, the trade union bureaucrats like to refer to the tradition of the company, which was founded by the right-wing social-democrat Robert Bosch in 1886. At that time, German industry was at the height of global capitalist development. Working conditions improved enormously under these circumstances—mainly due to the work of the early Social Democratic Party led by August Bebel, which built up the trade

unions and organised the working masses under the banner of Marxism.

Less than 30 years later, the reformist illusions that had developed in the SPD were exposed with the advent of World War I. In 1913, the Bosch plant in Stuttgart was temporarily closed due to a strike for better wages and working conditions. On August 4, 1914, the SPD parliamentary group in the Reichstag voted in favour of the Kaiser's war credits. As Rosa Luxemburg so aptly said: capitalism presented the working class with the alternative of "socialism or barbarism."

Once again today, capitalist society is heading for disaster. War and trade wars are escalating at a pace not seen since the Second World War. US President Donald Trump is accelerating and exacerbating this tendency.

In the trade war, global corporations, especially in the auto industry, are planning massive changes at the expense of the workforce. No plant, no job, no wage, no pension is safe from the merciless hunt for yield and profit.

As is the case at VW, IG Metall is prepared to enforce these changes. In best co-manager manner, works councillor Sell complains about the management's failure to lead and its refusal to discuss a concept for the entire company. "There is a lack of entrepreneurial courage," Sell says. That's why "we're hurtling towards a wall at 200 km/h and nobody dares to be the first to brake."

This is all hogwash and Sell knows it. Hartung and the company he heads do have a concept. Jobs will be cut and wages reduced until the desired profit margin is reached. To this end, Hartung has instructed the works councils in each individual division and at each plant to negotiate separately with the respective board members and managers. This is intended to prevent a joint response from the approximately 130,000 workers in Germany and almost 420,000 workers worldwide.

In order to provide a powerful response to the attacks, employees must organise themselves into independent action committees. All colleagues, whether IGM members or not, who seriously want to fight for jobs and wages must organise themselves in these committees.

The 420,000 Bosch employees worldwide are already a huge social force, when united. They will be joined in a genuine struggle by the 670,000 VW employees and many other millions of workers around the world. Everywhere there is growing resistance to the impending attacks.

For their part, the trade union apparatuses are determined to break the resistance of the workforce. They are closely allied with the SPD and the other parties in the Bundestag, maintaining that the current federal election should not be disrupted by protesting or even striking workers. IG Metall is therefore postponing its nationwide day of protest, on which demonstrations have been registered in Hanover, Stuttgart, Cologne, Frankfurt and Leipzig, until 15 March, i.e., after the election.

The aim is to strengthen the backing of the next federal government so it can push through attacks on jobs, incomes and social benefits, step up rearmament and expand its involvement in war.

The Socialist Equality Party's (SGP) election appeal for the

federal elections therefore states:

The German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and its affiliates, such as IG Metall and Verdi, fully endorse the government's pro-war policies. Their well-paid functionaries and corporatist works council representatives stand on the side of shareholders and management. They pit workforces from different plants and countries against one another and are willing to make any concession to keep "their" location competitive in the global race for lower costs and higher profits. At Volkswagen, IG Metall and the works council have supported the cuts, cynically celebrating them as a "Christmas miracle."

To defend jobs, wages and rights, workers must organize independently of the trade union bureaucracy and unite internationally. We call for the establishment of action committees that are controlled by and responsible only to the rank and file. These committees must defend every job at all locations as a matter of principle and reject any concessions on wages and social benefits.

This struggle must be waged internationally. The action committees must overcome the divisions within the workforce—between permanent and temporary employees, between different locations and between car brands—and establish networks with action committees in other plants, companies and countries. We have launched the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) for this purpose.

Not a penny for armaments! Health and education instead of armaments and war!

Defend all jobs! Build independent action committees!

Expropriate the landlords, energy companies and war profiteers without compensation!

Workers who agree should contact the action committee immediately. You can register via Whatsapp at +49-163-337 8340 or register using the form below.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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