

Vote for the Action Committee list in the Berlin Transport staff council elections!

Transport Workers Action Committee

16 May 2025

Dear Colleagues,

The experiences of recent months underscore the urgency of organizing ourselves independently. We are running in the staff council elections to free ourselves from the straitjacket of the Verdi (Public Service workers trade union) and build genuine resistance from below. We demand:

- Full compensation for all of the wage losses in recent years!
- Stop Verdi's dominance in the Depot Group North!
- Disclosure of all agreements between union officials, politicians and management!
- Joint resistance against austerity and the government's rearmament policy!

In November last year, the Verdi list lost its majority among driving personnel in the staff council elections for the first time. After years of real wage losses, our colleagues had come to the conclusion that nothing more could be achieved with this union. Verdi lost its staff council majority not only among the approximately 2,500 employees in Depot Group North, but also in Depot Group South.

Now, six months later, the Verdi bargaining committee has once again used dirty tricks to push through a contract that falls far short of our original demands.

We oppose this sellout! Our list will ensure that the rank and file have the final say, and we will work with trusted colleagues to forge a leadership to prepare and organize the coming struggles.

It is high time. If we do not start to fight back now, the downward spiral will continue, and at an even faster pace than before.

Good working conditions—more staff in the driving and technical areas, safe vehicles, good sanitary facilities, break rooms, longer turnaround and driving times, fewer shifts, and higher wages—can only be achieved through a joint struggle against the entire political establishment, and that includes the Verdi apparatus.

The contract agreement is a sham. Instead of the €750 more we demanded in last fall's poll, we now get just €380 from June 1, 2025, and another pitiful €50 from June 1,

2026, plus a measly increase in allowances. In addition, the contract term has been extended to two years, which means that the increase in the pay scale is only half as high when calculated on an annual basis. This does not even begin to compensate for the real wage losses of recent years.

This year's contract agreement was reached in a completely undemocratic manner. In the ballot, which ended on April 4, 2025, we voted 95.4 percent in favour of an indefinite strike. We rejected the Berlin Transport Company's (BVG) miserable offer and stuck to our original demands. However, the Verdi bargaining committee ignored this clear statement by the rank and file. Instead of a full strike, it initiated arbitration proceedings at the same time as the strike ballot.

The bargaining committee immediately recommended accepting the arbitration recommendation, even though the arbitration result differed only minimally from the employer's original offer, which had been rejected by an overwhelming majority in the strike ballot.

The vote in favour by the Verdi members polled (65.1 percent) at the end of April cannot hide the fact that the contract is a slap in the face to the democratic will of the workforce. The narrow result reflects the realization that nothing better can be expected from the union.

The situation at BVG is part of a general political development which we must respond to at grassroots level.

Not only in the workplace, but in social life as a whole, the working population no longer has any representation. All of the establishment parties close ranks when it comes to imposing military rearmament and social cuts at the expense of workers.

This is especially true of the Social Democrats and the Left Party. In the global crisis of capitalism, they are proving to be the most degenerate representatives of the ruling elite. In Germany, they support the government's insane trillion-euro arms program, the costs of which are to be extracted from the workers through social cuts and intensified exploitation. They support the NATO war against Russia, and they unreservedly back the genocide in Gaza and silence any

critical voices with the absurd accusation of anti-Semitism. This shows the ruthlessness with which they will also act against the rights of workers here.

If the union officials, who usually belong to or are close to the Social Democrats or the Left Party, were simply corrupt, they could be replaced. But there is more at stake. What is needed is not just new faces, but a new political orientation that puts the interests of workers above those of big business and finance and all their governments and institutions.

The low-wage contract agreement for local transport (TV-N), which has led to the current catastrophic situation, was introduced 20 years ago in collaboration with Verdi by the SPD-Left Party Berlin Senate, which implemented a brutal austerity program. Senator Harald Wolf of the Left Party's predecessor, the PDS, was responsible for the BVG at the time.

The well-heeled Verdi bureaucrat Jeremy Arndt, head of the contract bargaining commission and deputy chairman of the BVG supervisory board, stands very much in this tradition. He is justifying the lousy wage agreement with the argument that more is not possible because the state of Berlin has less money available due to the coalition agreement of the new German government. The "framework conditions" were very difficult, the wage commission argued. Cuts are being made everywhere, so we can't demand more. State finances simply won't allow it.

We, in the action committee, reject these cowardly excuses and take a fundamentally different position. We say: Our rights are more important than profits and rearmament. There is enough money, but just not for us. The federal government is intent on spending a trillion euros on rearming the Bundeswehr, switching to a war economy, and militarizing society.

It is a clear warning of future attacks on our living conditions that the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) is praising what is certainly the most right-wing government in the history of the Federal Republic and supporting its war policy!

No wonder the Verdi list wants to keep the discussion about politics out of the staff council elections! This is the only way they can cover up their own anti-worker policies. Conversely, we can only organize genuine resistance against social cuts and war if we break with all the pro-capitalist policies!

The other lists in this election also refuse to take a political stand, and ultimately cover up for Verdi's disastrous policies. It is not enough to merely replace the Verdi staff councils, we have to commence a real fight for our rights.

We must oppose the gradual privatization of the BVG, which is clearly evident in the ongoing outsourcing of bus routes. Billions in state investment are needed not only to

maintain public transportation—and thus our jobs—but also to improve public transport and reduce ticket costs for Berlin citizens.

This requires the establishment of our action committee in all areas of local transport and among our colleagues at the companies Berlin Transport GmbH (BT), the Tirley bus companies, and Schröder Reisen from Ulm, which have now taken over more than 10 percent of BVG lines. Our allies are our colleagues in the city's subway system and German Rail (Deutsche Bahn), as well as other public service and industrial workers. That is why we also reject the new federal government's anti-migrant campaign, which is intended to divide us workers and push through its war agenda.

Our action committee stands for two principles:

- Our needs, the needs of workers, have priority over the profit interests of company management and their political backers, which means: a return to socialist principles. We are the ones who keep public transport running under extremely difficult working conditions.
- We oppose the dividing up of our colleagues according to companies, industries and nations. We work closely with the IWA-RFC (International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees) because the working class worldwide is threatened by the same dangers of social cuts, poverty, war and fascism.

Don't hesitate to get in touch with us at: +491748402566. Vote for us in the staff council elections and register using the form below to help build the Transport Workers' Action Committee.



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