

Bosch workers in Germany express support for the formation of action committees

Our Reporters
12 February 2026

Over the past two weeks, members of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) spoke with workers at several Bosch plants in Baden-Württemberg. In numerous conversations—in front of factory gates during shift changes—workers expressed their rejection and open displeasure with the IG Metall union apparatus. Many workers, including both IG Metall members and colleagues who have already turned their backs on the union, supported the proposal to build independent rank-and-file action committees.

Bosch plans to cut 22,000 jobs and close entire plants. Head of Mobility Markus Heyn and Director of Industrial Relations Stefan Grosch openly justified the jobs massacre by saying that profits are to be doubled to €7 billion within two years by the end of 2026.

The IG Metall apparatus and the General Works Council Chairman of the Mobility business sector, Frank Sell, immediately signalled agreement—under the condition of “site guarantees.” For almost a year, local IG Metall officials and works council members have been enforcing the job cuts demanded by the corporation at one location after another—accompanied by lip service to investments for “securing the location.”

But resistance is stirring against this. At Bosch Automotive Steering GmbH in Schwäbisch Gmünd, this also finds expression in the works council. There, works council member Mustafa Simsek opposed the secret machinations of the works council body and received support from more than 200 workers. They now want to found a new union organisation and run with their own slate in the upcoming works council elections.

The IG Metall apparatus reacted to this opposition with time-honoured bureaucratic suppression and rejected the admission of the “Free Metalworkers” slate with 89 candidates for the works council elections in March, citing alleged formal errors.

The SGP opposed this decision and called on the *World Socialist Web Site* for all workers at Bosch to defend the right of the “Free Metalworkers” slate to participate in the works council election. Employees have the right “to decide for themselves who should represent them on the works council,” the SGP wrote.

Members of the SGP discussed this article with workers in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Feuerbach, Schwieberdingen and Waiblingen in order to break through the division created by the IG Metall apparatus.

Schwäbisch Gmünd

In front of Plant I, most workers spoke angrily about IG Metall and at the same time are concerned about their jobs. The atmosphere in the factory hall is tense, almost depressed, they say. Many do not know how things will proceed. Working conditions are worsening, monitoring by supervisors is noticeably increasing. Since the announcement of the job cuts in November, numerous workers are being put under pressure to resign in return for severance pay. Some fear that the jobs reduction will go far beyond the announced figures—their experiences showed that agreements between IG Metall and management were never kept.

At Plant II in Schiesstal, which is to be closed at the end of 2027, every worker took a flyer. A young worker reported that he was practically forced to accept the severance pay and leave. “I worked here for seven years,” he said, “I don’t know what I should do in the future.” Not only is Bosch closing the plant, but several small and large plants in the region are closing. “It will be very difficult to find a job in the future,” he concluded.

Another worker explained that no one among the workers accepted the agreement between IG Metall and management on the closure. The union merely informed them that nothing could be done to save the plant. “They said that everyone would be offered socially acceptable solutions, but I have heard the opposite,” one worker said.

A worker from Plant I, at the company since 1987, reported that he will be working until the end of 2027. Having to start all over again after decades in the company was a bitter disappointment. When asked about IG Metall, he reacts immediately, “You don’t need to explain the role of IG Metall to me. I left in the mid-90s and had enough time to observe their machinations.”

Interest in the works council elections in March seems low. A worker summed up the widespread mood: “When there are elections, the candidates come and chat with you, but after the elections we run after them whenever we need something.” Furthermore, they would “negotiate secretly with the company management about our fate behind our backs,” which always ended in a catastrophe.

Workforces at other locations know nothing of the conflicts in Schwäbisch Gmünd. IG Metall works council reps systematically prevent any information exchange between the plants.

Feuerbach

In Feuerbach, where up to 3,500 jobs in development, administration and production are to be cut, many workers hear for the first time about the events in Schwäbisch Gmünd. At the shift change, everyone took a leaflet, with several reporting that they have already lost their jobs and are dissatisfied with the severance pay.

A young worker who completed his training as an electronics technician last year complained that he is deployed in production. He said most apprentices would be working in unskilled production.

Six months ago, the HR department had promised to transfer him to a workplace consistent with his training—nothing happened. “My colleagues have had the same experiences,” he said. “Some have already left the company.” He suspects there is a system behind it: “That’s frustrating and drives one to give up one’s job.” Since this year, apprentices only receive a contract limited to one year.

He is a member of IG Metall, but that does not help him: “I am also thinking about looking for a corresponding job elsewhere. But the prospects are very bleak.”

Another young worker said his job is probably safe at the moment, but is sceptical about what will come in the next few months. IG Metall has agreed to abolish the T-ZUG, contractually agreed supplementary payments (27.5 percent of average monthly salary) and T-ZUG B (26.5 percent of the contracted salary), which are paid out once a year. Night surcharges and Christmas bonuses are also being cut. He also criticised the secret negotiations between the works council and management: “No one knows the content.”

Waiblingen

Bosch is closing its plant in Waiblingen, which has existed for 70 years, and cutting a total of 560 jobs by the end of 2028. At first, workers hesitated to speak with us. Various pseudo-left groups and parties had previously been at the plant, claiming to want to help, but in fact support the union apparatus.

But after they read the headline of our leaflet—“Bosch in Schwäbisch Gmünd: Defend the internal opposition against the IG Metall apparatus! Build independent Action Committees!”—many stopped. They consider the resistance in Schwäbisch Gmünd important. Almost all say they cannot comment on the current negotiations at their site. “No one believes that these negotiations can prevent the closure,” a worker summarised.

Another worker reported: “I was a shop steward until recently, I gave that up, I want nothing more to do with IG Metall, an organisation that constantly lies to its members. It is morally justified to distance oneself from them and stand by the workers in these difficult times.”

In the plant, an IG Metall banner still hangs bearing the cynical

slogan “The future exists only with us.” The future that IG Metall offers means job cuts, plant closures and social decline for the workers.

Despite their anger, many workers view the closure as a fait accompli. Decades of betrayal by the union bureaucracy have worn them down.

One agreed with our assessment that the purpose of the union apparatus consists of defusing independent struggles and enforcing cutback programmes. He considers action committees a “good thing.”

Our conversations show that the discontent with the IG Metall apparatus is enormous and is developing into a “rebellion against IG Metall.” At the same time, decades of experience with defeats have destroyed trust in trade union politics. Many understand that it is not just about individual corrupt works council members or careerists, but that the fight for rights and achievements requires more than changing a few heads. It is even more important now to organise independently of the trade union apparatus.

The two fundamental principles on which action committees must be based were discussed animatedly by workers:

- The action committees must connect workforces across locations, companies, sectors and countries by joining the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). The divisions sown by the unions must be overcome. An attack on one is an attack on all locations and their employees.

- The action committees must pursue a perspective that reaches beyond capitalism—that is, beyond the private ownership of the means of production and the nationally based system of competition, which the union apparatuses defend so vehemently. It is not possible to defend jobs and wages, and at the same time accept the conditions imposed by the markets and international competitive pressures. Otherwise, one inevitably ends up with the policies of IG Metall and all the other unions. The decisive question is: Who determines matters of production—the shareholders or the workers who build everything?

Many workers reacted approvingly to the call to overcome the divisions sown by IG Metall. Agreement in words must now be followed by deeds. Contact us via WhatsApp on +491633378340, or fill out the form below.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact