

Say No to the Verdi Collective Bargaining Agreement—Join the independent Transport Workers Action Committee

Transport Workers Action Committee
19 April 2026

The following is a statement by the Transport Workers Action Committee in Germany on the sellout deal between the Verdi union and the Berlin Transport Company.

Colleagues,

The Transport Workers Action Committee calls for a no vote on the Verdi trade union member survey that began on Monday regarding the union's recommendation for a collective bargaining agreement with the Berlin Transport Company (BVG).

At the same time, we urge you to contact us and strengthen our independent Action Committee. In the light of international developments, it is essential that we organize independently and free ourselves from the grip of the Verdi apparatus and the parties closely allied with it in the German parliament (Bundestag) and the Berlin Senate—in particular the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Left Party.

The military redivision of the world, led by the biggest imperialist power, the US, is determining all social processes and developments. The war fronts in Ukraine, the Middle East, Central and South America, as well as in Asia, are part of an escalating world war. All of the major powers are arming themselves in insane fashion and diverting trillions of dollars into military spending. They intend to squeeze these enormous sums out of us, the working class.

All the hard-won social gains of the 20th century are to be abolished for the sake of war, not only in Germany, but in every country.

The conclusion

Our struggle is also affected by this social counterrevolution. The framework collective agreement presented by Verdi will do nothing to change our poor working conditions.

The gradual increase in vacation days to 33 per year by 2029 comes with an “optional model” in which employees can choose between additional vacation time and financial compensation (0.45 percent of pay per additional vacation day).

The change to vacation pay also offers little relief: Starting in 2027, it will increase by only 100 euros instead of the 500 euros we demanded—and can also be offset against the so-called optional vacation.

Given the skyrocketing prices caused by the war of aggression against Iran, almost all of us will be forced to forgo our vacation days.

Our burden will only increase and be cemented.

For night shifts, there will be only one extra vacation day starting at 150 night shift hours, with a maximum of five additional vacation days upon reaching 550 night hours; anything beyond a fifth day will be “discussed in 2027.”

The “increase” of the minimum rest period to 11 hours and the limitation of shift length to 12 hours remain within the current BVG model and explicitly do not rule out longer shifts, split shifts and six-day workweeks.

Regarding shift change times, nothing new is being regulated; instead, they are being buried in a “commission” for “revision.”

Verdi has stated that the long timeframe for the contract—four years until the end of 2029—protects against attacks by the BVG. “The employer side made it very clear in these collective bargaining negotiations that they want to tamper with many provisions of the framework agreement,” reads a Verdi statement on the collective bargaining outcome from March 31. “We must prevent this, and a longer term helps in doing so.”

In plain language: Anyone who rejects this sellout can expect even greater attacks. “Take it or leave it!” This demonstrates once again the role of the Verdi apparatus and its defenders as the ones serving up these attacks to us workers.

Armaments and war instead of public services

But we are not dealing only with the Verdi apparatus and the BVG executive. The BVG justifies its refusal to fundamentally improve our working conditions with the “tight global economic situation” and the supposedly empty public coffers. In reality, the government is spending a trillion euros on “war readiness” and rearmament. The money is there—just not for us!

Public transportation is facing brutal cuts. The federal transportation budget was slashed from 38.3 billion euros last year to 28.2 billion this year—a reduction of nearly 28 percent. According to the transportation contract, the BVG receives around 1.3 billion euros annually, which, however, does not cover actual needs. The BVG's debt is set to skyrocket from 1.4 billion euros in 2024 to over 3.7 billion euros by 2028 because the Senate is forcing the BVG to take out loans—only to then claim that there is no money for staff and better working conditions.

Ultimately, this will pave the way for the complete privatization of the BVG. Even now, following the privatization of the Ringbahn here in Berlin, other transport systems such as the S-Bahn subway network—the North-South subnetworks and the Stadtbahn—are also slated for privatization. They are to be awarded to a private consortia comprising S-Bahn Berlin GmbH, Siemens, Stadler and other corporations, thereby further fragmenting the system.

The same thing is happening to colleagues in many other countries. In Paris, 19,000 employees of the RATP public transit network—with 308 lines and over 4,500 buses—are set to be sold to global corporations by the end of this year. In Chicago, more than 40 percent of the Chicago Transit Authority’s public transit system faces dismantling because the Trump administration will no longer cover the \$771 million deficit. In Madrid, a strategy to liberalize the EMT urban bus sector has been underway for years, opening it up to private capital and outsourcing individual services.

And everywhere, the union bureaucracies play the same role: They limit protests to symbolic actions, agree to lousy compromises, push through cutbacks and prevent workers from uniting across companies, cities and countries. In contrast stands the International Workers’ Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), with which we collaborate. It fights to unite transport workers in Berlin, Paris, Chicago, Madrid and worldwide to organize joint struggles against social cuts, war and fascism.

Verdi and the pseudo-left: Feedback loops instead of a general strike

Even at the time of the 2025 collective bargaining agreement, it was clear that real improvements could only be achieved through an indefinite strike by all local transit workers—including those on the S-Bahn, which is threatened by further dismantling and privatization. This is precisely what the leaderships of Verdi and the two German Rail (Deutsche Bahn) house unions—EVG and GDL—have prevented.

The conclusion is clear: The union leaders act as co-managers in the interests of the government and corporations. They support the government’s arms buildup and war policies and suppress any serious resistance to them.

Outrage over this is growing—yet within the Verdi apparatus, pseudo-left organisations in particular ensure that this opposition is defused and kept under control. They present themselves as “reformers” of the union, but in reality they nip every independent movement from below in the bud.

Representatives on bargaining committees and shop stewards like Manuel von Stubenrauch—who, as a tram driver and Verdi shop steward, sells the new “transparency” and “feedback” as a democratic breakthrough—serve precisely this purpose: They give the bureaucracy’s maneuvers a seemingly “left-wing” and grassroots veneer, but at the decisive moment defend the course of the Verdi leadership, which enforces the directives of the Senate, the government and the companies.

These pseudo-leftists receive political backing from the Left Party, which has been and remains actively involved in cuts and privatizations in the Senate and in the districts.

The Action Committee must be consciously developed against these maneuvers by the Left Party and its union proxies as an independent

alternative that pits the interests of the workforce against the demands for “restraint” and “austerity” aimed at keeping the war chest full, and that does not divide us as BVG employees from our colleagues in other transit companies, in the public sector, in the private sector, in administration and in industry.

Our immediate demands—What we really need

We counter the Verdi agreement with our own immediate demands, which stem from our daily experience and the real needs of our colleagues:

1) Mandatory introduction of the 30-hour workweek with full wage compensation for all driving staff. Only a significant reduction in weekly working hours with full pay can end the constant work overload.

2) Abolition of six-day shifts and a maximum of eight hours per shift—including in split shifts. The formal “37-hour workweek” obscures the actual time on duty, which rises to over 50 hours in a six-day shift week, destroys our health and endangers passenger safety.

3) At least 10 minutes of paid turnaround time after one hour behind the wheel—even in the event of traffic jams, detours, or other traffic chaos. Rest periods at the terminal must be guaranteed in the schedule and in practice, and not split up or shortened if the driving time is shorter; a digital tachograph is necessary for this.

4) Reversal of the reduction in bus service and simultaneous extension of rest periods between individual shift days to at least 12 hours. The necessary increase in staff and vehicles per route reduces stress and prevents overcrowded buses and long wait times.

5) The equipping of all terminal stations with high-quality restroom facilities and air-conditioned break rooms. The current conditions—a lack of toilets, filthy containers, or mobile “outhouses”—are unacceptable and harmful to health.

6) Illness must not be punished: Abolish the reduction of the Christmas bonus for prolonged illness, abolish the so-called “negative prognosis” for prolonged illness, and put an end to dismissals due to illness.

7) Prepare for a full-scale strike through democratically run staff meetings. Only an indefinite joint strike by all local transit workers—including S-Bahn, U-Bahn, and private operators—can achieve our demands.

Therefore, support our action committee and help build independent action committees in all depots, on the S-Bahn and U-Bahn, and in the workshops. Don’t waste time—reach out to us. Contact us at +49 174 8402566 and sign up to help build the Transport Workers Action Committee!



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)