

Stellantis in Germany: 650 engineering jobs at Opel in Rüsselsheim on the line

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In April, Stellantis announced it would cut 650 of the remaining 1,650 jobs at its development center in Rüsselsheim, Germany, in open violation of an ongoing “Future Collective Bargaining Agreement” [Zukunftstarifvertrag]. Just a few weeks into the deal it has become clear that this is part of a plan endangering production sites in Rüsselsheim and Eisenach, Germany.

At the Investor Day on May 21 in Auburn Hills, Michigan, Stellantis CEO Antonio Filosa announced the company’s new “Fastlane 2030” strategy. It positions Opel as a solely regional brand for Germany and Northern Europe, largely excluded from the global market and without new investments. Overall, production capacity in Europe will be reduced by 800,000 cars annually. At the same time, capacity utilization at European plants will rise from 60 to 80 percent.

This means the workforce will pay the price for the crisis of the electric vehicle strategy that Filosa’s predecessor, Carlos Tavares, had pursued. In its 2025 financial statements, Stellantis recorded extraordinary write-downs totaling 22.3 billion euros, resulting in a net loss of roughly the same amount. The operating loss, by contrast, amounted to only 842 million euros.

Stellantis apparently intends to offset the costly return to internal combustion engines through plant closures, job cuts, and intensified exploitation. What else could the production of 800,000 fewer cars while factories operate at higher capacity mean, if not plant closures?

In the four years after the formation of Stellantis in 2021 from the merger of Fiat Chrysler and Peugeot, more than 50,000 of 300,000 jobs were cut worldwide. Recently, temporary and low-wage workers have been brought in at assembly plants, but they can be hired and laid off easily. Today, the new plans threaten thousands more Stellantis workers worldwide.

Workers have already endured painful experiences recently. In the US, Stellantis has eliminated thousands of jobs in Detroit, Toledo and Warren. In the UK, the Vauxhall plant in Luton, which until recently employed 1,100 workers, was closed in March 2025. In Italy, the company is preparing a bloodbath at the Fiat plants after producing and selling fewer cars last year than it did seventy years ago. Nearly half of the Italian workforce has been repeatedly put on short-time work.

In France and Spain as well, production lines in Poissy, Zaragoza, and Madrid stood idle for weeks in the fall of 2025.

As for Rüsselsheim, there is much fanfare surrounding the new “green” Opel campus. But this cannot hide the systematic decline of Opel’s largest production site. The plant employed over 40,000 people in three shifts in the 1970s and still had around 19,000 employees when General Motors was acquired by PSA in 2017. It now employs fewer than 8,000 people, including everyone in production, the training workshop, development and administration. In production, around 1,500 workers—about 40 percent of whom are temporary workers—now work a single day shift, following the discontinuation of two-shift operations in December 2024.

Although the Eisenach plant still operates two shifts, several periods of short-time work last fall served as a warning sign that jobs there are not secure either. In Kaiserslautern, Germany, where only about 800 employees out of more than 2,000 are still manufacturing components, plans for a battery gigafactory have been scrapped. The facility was supposed to employ over 2,000 workers, but the project was terminated in February 2026.

Research and development departments are also at risk. In Rüsselsheim, the toolmaking, forging, transmission manufacturing and CAD technology departments have already been shut down, and the test track in Rodgau-Dudenhofen, Germany ceased operations at the end of last year.

The International Technical Development Center (ITEZ), which once employed 7,000 engineers and technicians, has been gradually hollowed out. In 2018, a large portion was outsourced to the French service provider Segula, which filed for insolvency under its own administration in July 2025. Around 700 jobs were eliminated through the move.

Now, the jobs of 650 of the 1,650 engineers still working for Opel at ITEZ are under acute threat. In the future, the remaining Opel engineers will develop only systems for steering, seats or lighting. The powertrain, battery and digital architecture will come from the new Chinese partners Leapmotor and Dongfeng. It is precisely international cooperation and the introduction of modern technologies, primarily AI that enable management to dispense with labor and put even greater pressure on the last remaining engineers

than before.

This can no longer be tolerated! For far too long, Opel workers have been clenching their fists in frustration. The reason this situation persists is the refusal of the union leadership—which in Germany, means primarily IG Metall and the works councils it dominates—to take up any fight.

The existing union apparatus is fully integrated into management. IG Metall pursues a “location” policy that pits workers at different locations against one another, just as they pit permanent workers against temporary workers. Every round of cutbacks been carried out “in consultation with IG Metall and the works council,” even when it comes to the closure of entire plants, such as Antwerp (2010) and Bochum (2014).

Neither PSA’s takeover of Opel (2017) nor the merger into Stellantis (2021) has changed any of this. The job cuts were exchanged for the promise of a series of new “future contracts” that were supposedly meant to secure the remaining jobs. But these have proven worthless, as shown for example in the engineering positions at ITEZ. The contract that was supposed to guarantee job security until 2029 is simply being broken.

The reaction of IG Metall and the works council is telling. On May 12, 2026, a completely ineffective protest was organized during contract negotiations at the Adam Opel House, at which works council chairman Lars Thiel and HR director Ralph Wangemann appeared together before the assembled crowd of about 1,000 Opel employees. Thiel called for a “future-oriented and functional” structure for the development center, but Wangemann saw no reason to make any concrete concessions. Thiel promised that the works council would “not shy away from the talks”—whereupon all employees returned to work.

The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) and the International Workers’ Alliance of Action Committees (IWA-RFC) advocate for the formation of independent rank-and-file committees—-independent of IG Metall bureaucrats and the works council.

Such committees, by establishing contact with colleagues in other plants and countries, can lay the groundwork for a united struggle to defend jobs. The Stellantis Group today encompasses a wide variety of brands in very different countries: Opel, Vauxhall, Fiat, Peugeot, Citroën, DS, Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, Maserati and Abarth. In Canada and the US, Stellantis workers have already begun collaborating across borders. The central demands must be:

- Defend every single job—whether in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, the US, Canada, India, China or anywhere else! Stop pitting one location against another!

- Defend temporary and contract workers! End the division between permanent and temporary workers!

- No job cuts from the introduction of new technologies, especially AI! If AI reduces working hours, the work must be distributed among everyone and the workweek shortened with full wage compensation.

The international unity of the workforce is crucial to

effectively combat corporate-wide job cuts. Production methods within a global corporation have long since created the conditions for this. For example, a new vehicle platform called “STLA One” is currently being developed, on the basis of which up to 70 percent identical components can be used in the future at the Opel, Citroën, Alfa Romeo, Chrysler, and Dodge plants. At the plants in Poissy (France) and Zaragoza (Spain), collaborations with Chinese (Leapmotor, Dongfeng) and Indian (Tata) partners are planned.

The elimination of engineering jobs, in particular, highlights the sheer absurdity of today’s system: the more advanced technology becomes, and the more it could simplify, lighten, and make work more effective and creative overall, the more difficult the situation becomes for workers.

Under private control, every technological achievement becomes a source of worry and hardship for workers and employees. The more effective and advanced the new technology, the faster workers’ jobs are cut, their wages reduced and their families deprived of the ability to buy and use the products of their own labor.

The root of the problem lies not in technology, but in the capitalist profit system, in which all profits are privatized while losses are foisted upon the working class. As Leon Trotsky explained in the “Transitional Program,” the prerequisites for revolution are when “Mankind’s productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth ... The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only ‘ripened;’ they have begun to get somewhat rotten.”

The rank-and-file committees we propose will be based on the principle that workers’ rights take precedence over profit interests. As the *World Socialist Web Site* recently wrote regarding the mass layoffs in the auto industry, “the struggle to defend jobs must be linked to the struggle against militarism and war and their root cause, capitalism. If there is one thing society can no longer afford, it is not, as Chancellor Merz claims, the welfare state, but the billionaire oligarchs, whose fortunes are beyond belief and must be expropriated.”

All Opel employees and other auto workers are invited to register via the form below to help build an independent rank-and-file committee!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact