



Magazin

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Co-determination in IT

BETTER WITH WORKS COUNCIL

“IT’S BURNING”

Interview with Jürgen Kerner on
the industrial crisis – page 8

OFF TO MOROCCO

How IT jobs are going offshore –
page 10

Christiane Benner
First Chairperson of IG Metall



Foto: Lando Hass

STANDING UP! FOR GOOD WORK AND FAIR COOPERATION

Dear colleagues,

When Spring arrives, employees will choose fellow workers from their ranks to represent their interests in a works council. This is workplace democracy in action. We live at a time when democratic values are under global attack, so every vote counts. Your vote counts. You and your workplace are where co-determination begins.

A works council is not a “nice-to-have.” It is a shield, a voice, a creator. It ensures that decisions are made with you, not about you. Your nationality doesn’t matter. What matters is that you are here – and that you want to help shape things.

In this issue, you’ll read about what works councils—supported by IG Metall—can achieve in the IT industry: better working conditions,

working hours to fit your life, and fair cooperation instead of arbitrariness. You’ll meet courageous colleagues who are founding works councils where they are urgently needed – often against resistance from above. With heart, conviction, and a good dose of courage, these are people who deserve our respect.

But a works council alone is not enough. Work councils become truly effective when they have a strong union behind them. IG Metall stands for security in the storm—case in point: Atos. Thanks to a collective agreement, IG Metall members now benefit from an exclusive bonus (see page 11). Our IG Metall is facing challenges like never before. Germany is at a crossroads: the future of industry – and with

it hundreds of thousands of jobs – is at stake, especially in the steel and automotive industries. This also affects the IT sector. The relocation of IT jobs is already a reality (see page 10).

That’s why my colleague Jürgen Kerner and I invited people to the conference “Germany must remain an industrialized country” in Berlin. Together with workplace representatives, politicians, and researchers, we discussed what needs to happen now. You can read Jürgen’s assessment on page 8.

We can make a difference – because we are many. Because you are part of it. And if you are not yet a member, now is the perfect time to join our strong community. Join Team IG Metall. You are very welcome! ■

IN THIS ISSUE

Infographic: How to set up a works council page 3

Cover Story: “This is living democracy” – What works councils achieve in IT page 4

Interview: Jürgen Kerner, IG Metall Vice Chair, on the industrial crisis page 8

Report: For a fraction in Morocco – How IT jobs are moving offshore page 10

HOW DO I SET UP A WORKS COUNCIL?

There is no magic involved in creating a works council. The law protects work council founders against arbitrariness, bullying, and dismissal. However, you do need a certain amount of courage to get the job done because employers don't always play fair. You will find some diagrams below that show how it works. One thing always applies: the more IG Metall members you are, the better. Your union is always at your side.

WORKFORCE



To establish a works council, you require a minimum of five employees who are eligible to vote in the company. Three eligible employees must push ahead with the initiative. They invite all employees to an election meeting; alternatively, a trade union can also do this. The initiators of the works council enjoy protection against dismissal.



ELECTION MEETING

At the election meeting, company employees elect a committee to oversee the election, typically consisting of three people. They also enjoy protection against dismissal.



WORKS COUNCIL

The size of a works council depends on the size of the company. For example, a company with up to 100 employees has a five-member works council, a company with up to 200 employees has a seven-member works council, and so on. The constituent meeting elects a chairperson. The works council can also set up committees.



ELECTION OF THE WORKS COUNCIL

All employees aged 16 and over are eligible to vote, including part-time and temporary workers. The election takes place in a ballot box. Postal voting is also possible.



ELECTION COMMITTEE

The election committee prepares the election, draws up electoral lists, and conducts the election.



CO-DETERMINATION

The works council has a say in important matters, such as working hours and other relevant issues. The Works Constitution Act defines its rights.



EMPLOYER

They may not prevent a works council from being established (this is a criminal offense) and are obliged to cooperate with a works council.



“THIS IS LIVING DEMOCRACY”

“That surprised me,”—Andres Koschinski thought that a modern company should naturally have a works council. Since his employer didn’t have one yet, he founded one .

Photo: Markus Altmann

Every vote counts! Next spring, new works councils will also be elected in Germany's IT companies. But what's the point of employee co-determination anyway? *Kathryn Kortmann* visited several IT firms — and found some fascinating answers.

Andreas Koschinski started his new job at Magna Steyr Engineering & Testing in April 2016 with great enthusiasm. His new employer was an innovative and forward-looking industrial service provider in the IT sector.

Or so he thought at the time. After all, Magna Steyr in Sindelfingen implements projects for two German premium automotive brands—Mercedes-Benz and Porsche—and it is essential to stay up-to-date with the latest developments. But Andreas Koschinski quickly realized that what applies to the projects does not automatically apply to the working environment and working conditions. Works council? No. Collective bargaining agreement? No. “That surprised me a little,” says the 53-year-old. “I naturally assumed that a modern company like Magna would have a works council.”

Koschinski had learned the importance of co-determination for good and fair working conditions during his previous jobs in foundry model making and at an automotive supplier. And because he didn't want to give that up, he initiated the formation of a works council right at the start of his new job at Magna. “Unfortunately, this first attempt failed miserably,” says Andreas Koschinski, who has been a member of IG Metall since his apprenticeship. Many of his colleagues were likely unaware of the necessity for such a committee and the importance of union support at that time.

That changed abruptly when COVID-19 became a public health crisis and turned public and working life upside down – and Magna employees realized that without a works council, they were at the mercy of their employer's whims. The employer had decreed that employees could not accumulate overtime from home. Anything exceeding eight hours of work was to be automatically capped. “In an industry where customers make demands and need to be cared for virtually around the clock, this is absurd,” says Koschinski. “This has caused the general mood to deteriorate significantly.” And paved the way for the establishment of a works council. The election committee was appointed in the Spring of 2021 under strict coronavirus restrictions and with the moderation of IG Metall Stuttgart, outdoors in a soccer stadium in Sindelfingen. Despite the inclement weather conditions, more than 90 colleagues took part. “For us, this is an encouraging sign that we actually have support among the workforce,” says Koschinski, who became the first works council chairman at the Sindelfingen site at the constituent meeting in July.

Since then, the reality at work has been different for the employees at the development service provider, “a better one,” says Andreas Koschinski. “The days when working hours

could simply be capped are a thing of the past,” reports Birgit Funcke-Braitmaier, deputy works council chair since the committee was founded. “We regulated this right away in one of our first works agreements.” Business trips are now also credited in full to the working time account. Gone is the unequal treatment of employees who previously had flexitime or so-called all-inclusive contracts. Under these contracts, all overtime was reset to zero at the end of the month, without the option of taking whole flexitime days. “Now all colleagues work under the same conditions,” reports Koschinski. These changes have led to significantly greater satisfaction among the workforce. Employee turnover has decreased dramatically thanks to the works council. “The fact that we have achieved so much in a relatively short period of time is due not only to the commitment of the workforce and the works council, but also to the expertise and support of IG Metall,” says Koschinski. “They accompanied us step by step on our journey.”

The journey is not over yet. The next goal is a collective bargaining agreement. Only trade unions can negotiate this. For many engineers at Magna, this is a compelling reason to join IG Metall, thereby putting pressure on the employer. The collective bargaining agreement “is likely to be more difficult than setting up our works council and will meet with more resistance from the employer,” says Birgit Funcke-Braitmaier. There was no significant resistance from the company when the works council formed, as such committees are relatively common at production sites within the Magna Group.

Distractions from employers

Not all works council formations go as smoothly as in Sindelfingen. On the contrary, a 2024 study by the Economic and Social Science Institute (WSI) of the Hans Böckler Foundation showed that “obstruction of works council elections is not an isolated phenomenon.” Disruptions occur especially when employees want to elect a representative body for the first time. According to the WSI study, more than one in five new formations are sabotaged by employers. Even when several sites within a company group already have established co-determination, that's no guarantee that other locations will be able to elect a works council without attempts by the employer to interfere.

DXC Technology Deutschland Consulting in Eschborn, Hesse, recently provided an example of this. In August, several employees of the technology service provider convened a meeting to establish an election committee for the election of a works council. Christian Egner, the second representative of IG Metall Frankfurt and supervisor of the IT operations

there, was denied access to the meeting. The reason given was that IG Metall was not the union represented in the company. Additionally, management disputed the legality of the invitation to the meeting. “This is outrageous,” said Christian Egner indignantly. “In the two other companies in the group – DXC Technology Deutschland and EntServ Germany – not only do works councils exist, but IG Metall is also active in this regard. The dispute ended up before the labor court in Frankfurt. This followed the election committee’s urgent application in mid-September. According to the ruling, the com-

“We here in IT have our own unique problems, for which we need our own solutions.”

Markus Petke, IT project manager at Accumotive in Kamenz, represents the views of his colleagues as a works council member.



Photo: Andreas Franke

pany must provide the election committee formed in August with all the information and documents necessary to compile a voter list. “The labor court has thus cleared the way for the works council elections,” says Christian Egner. “This is a signal in the right direction and a commitment to co-determination in the workplace.”

“Not a sprint, but a marathon”

Berhard Schick also knows all too well that co-determination in the IT industry is not always welcomed with open arms. When he and two colleagues, with the support of IG Metall, successfully established a works council at the Wall-dorf-based software giant SAP in 2006, he faced numerous headwinds. Not only was company management skeptical,

but also large sections of the workforce. The committee was highly fragmented from the outset, with many lists and individuals pursuing very different interests. It was not until the most recent election in 2022 that Schick, who had a works council seat from the outset, together with his IG Metall list “Pro Mitbestimmung” (Pro Co-determination), achieved a historic election victory. For the first time, they were the strongest faction and have since provided the chairman in the form of the works council founder Schick.

“The work on the works council is not easy,” says the 58-year-old, “we have to organize our majorities on a case-by-case basis for each project we tackle” - a laborious task. “This makes it all the more important that I can rely on the structures and framework conditions for classic works council work provided by IG Metall.”

The works council has its hands full, especially in these times. The Baden-Württemberg-based software giant is frequently making headlines, whether it's announcing a new performance management system or implementing annual job cuts. This means that, although an agreement on job security until the end of 2026 ensures that SAP cannot make any redundancies for operational reasons, the pressure on colleagues is increasing. Those who leave voluntarily can expect to receive lucrative severance payments. The works council has negotiated regulations to this effect.

Schick and his IG Metall list still have a lot of work to do in terms of improving working conditions. "We will continue to fight for a transparent remuneration system that finally replaces the employer-dominated salary system," says the works council chairman. Or for suitable working arrangements for every colleague. "These projects cannot be achieved in a sprint; it's more like a marathon," explains Eberhard Schick, who will be standing for re-election with his IG Metall list in spring 2026. Preparations for this are already underway.

Active for equal conditions

The works council at MBition in Berlin is still relatively new. At the end of April 2024, colleagues at the wholly owned Mercedes subsidiary elected their first representative body, with the support of the IG Metall Berlin digital team. The software engineers who develop infotainment systems for the premium brand with the star come from all over the world, under entirely different conditions. Remuneration for equal work varies considerably by up to 50 percent. Nine of the 13 seats went to the IG Metall list in the first election. More than half of the workforce participated in the vote. "For a tech company where many colleagues still have little experience with works councils and also work remotely, that's a good result," says works council chair Victoria Fischer. In the summer, IG Metall members at MBition also elected shop stewards for the first time. They are a purely union matter. Only members of IG Metall can vote for them and be elected, unlike works council members, who all employees elect. Shop stewards play a crucial role in the works council, serving as a liaison between members, the works council, and IG Metall, thereby promoting collective bargaining and negotiation. They will also help prepare for the next works council election. "This is democracy in action," says Victoria Fischer. The chairwoman hopes that with her IG Metall list, she will have a more substantial showing in the election.

A different perspective

Software engineers and programmers—traditional professions in the IT industry—do not only work in pure IT companies. Many of them also earn their living in traditional manufacturing companies. There, they are usually in the minority and often struggle with entirely different issues than their colleagues in the factory halls. One of them is Markus Petke. The 54-year-old works as an IT project manager at Accumotive in Kamenz, a wholly owned subsidiary of Mercedes. There, in western Upper Lusatia in the Free State of Saxony, employees have been producing high-quality batteries for electric vehicles bearing the Mercedes star since 2012. The IT specialists at the site work closely with the Mercedes-Benz development department, building the high-voltage batteries for the lat-

est generation of Mercedes passenger cars. They also repair and recycle defective batteries, and occasionally subject the batteries to various stress tests. In doing so, they check, for example, how sensitive the complex energy storage devices are to heat, cold, or mechanical vibration. Markus Petke has also been a member of the works council for two years. He ensures that the 17-member committee hears the voices of the IT department. "We have our own unique problems here that we need solutions for," says Petke. "I bring this perspective to the meetings."

Take, for example, the issue of work intensification, which is currently increasing dramatically among IT colleagues due to the company's harsh austerity measures. "Nowadays, there is often only one expert for a particular topic. This leads to enormous problems in the event of illness or vacation," reports Petke, "because cell phones can never really be turned off completely after work, and because work piles up during absences and has to be dealt with upon return." On-call duty, regulations on Sunday work—some tests can only be carried out when production is at a standstill—or the introduction of new programs and the handling of sensitive data are also issues that specifically affect IT. "It's good when colleagues have a contact person on the works council who understands them without needing lengthy explanations, who they can reach quickly on site, and whom they trust," says works council member Petke. Without IG Metall, the working environment here would be different, he says. Not only because IG Metall, together with the works council and the workforce, pushed through the adoption of the regional collective agreement for the metal and electrical industry in Saxony. He also values the union's expertise in the area of co-determination. "The IG Metall training courses for works council members cannot be overestimated," says Markus Petke. "There, works council members learn not only the small and large work details, but their personalities are also strengthened to raise their voices and stand up for the employees."

Guarantees for more humanity

"Empowering" is also the motto under which IG Metall has chosen to hold its works council elections next year. For good reason, as Christiane Benner, First Chair of IG Metall, says: "As if ecological and technological change weren't challenging enough, the industry is jarred by one geopolitical shock after another: Corona, the war in Ukraine, including the energy crisis, and the customs chaos caused by the USA. It is our IG Metall works council members who, day after day in these turbulent times, stand up for the interests of our colleagues. For good and safe work." Around 600 companies in the information technology and telecommunications sector elected around 3,100 works council members in the Spring 2022 elections. More than half of them – 1,700 – are metalworkers. "They have done an excellent job," says Christiane Benner. "Thanks to their efforts, working conditions in the IT industry have noticeably improved in many places. They ensure regulated working hours, fair home office agreements, and transparent pay systems – often against bitter resistance from management. Works councils are the guarantors of less arbitrariness and more humanity." The first chairwoman of IG Metall says, "There can never be enough of this in companies." ■

“IT’S BURNING”

Jürgen Kerner, Second Chairperson of IG Metall, explains in an interview with *Bernd Kupilas* how dramatic the crisis in German industry is, why the IT sector is also affected, what needs to be done now, and why he is optimistic that Germany will remain a strong industrial nation.



Jürgen Kerner is Second Chairperson of IG Metall.

Photo: Thomas Range

Jürgen, IG Metall is sounding the alarm, and you yourself are talking about the threat of deindustrialization in Germany. Is the situation really that bad?

Yes, it is. The news from companies is overwhelming. We are experiencing a significant decline in the industry. This cannot go on any longer!

How do you determine that?

We receive new horror stories every day: Bosch wants to cut 13,000 jobs, Ford in Cologne is adding another 1,000 jobs to its existing reduction plans. We are seeing job cuts at Volkswagen, ZF, ThyssenKrupp, Continental, Putzmeister, and others. However, relocating or closing sites is a deeply defensive move. Fewer and fewer managers dare to focus on innovation and investment and face up to the competition. They prefer to downsize and manage smaller companies. Their willingness to take risks is declining steadily.

Does this development also affect IT employees?

Yes, and in some cases very specifically. At Ford, for example, countless jobs in development have already been lost in recent years. These include programmers, engineers, soft-

ware specialists, and many highly qualified IT professionals. Another industry that is currently being directly affected by the crisis in the automotive industry is that of development service providers. They are dependent on the major car manufacturers, and the industry is currently experiencing a large-scale migration of IT jobs, for example, to Morocco. IT employees are therefore directly affected in some cases, but ultimately, many highly qualified jobs in the field of information technology are also indirectly at risk. No one should be under any illusions about that. When value creation is lost on a large scale in the basic industries at the bottom of the chain, the effects ripple through all chains to the top, affecting areas with highly specialized technology jobs, especially since these jobs are also under pressure from another source: artificial intelligence (AI). This is not a crisis affecting only the old industries. It not only affects steelworkers.

How did this development come about?

Several factors are at play here. On the one hand, we have got bogged down in our energy policy. The price of electricity in our country is much too high. This must change immediately, not in 2026 or 2027. We've been fighting for this for years.

Secondly, we must abandon the idea that we live in a rules-based international trade order. Our managers have been relaxing in the globalization hammock. Optimizing purchasing and profits here and there is all they need. Donald Trump has overturned this system with his tariffs, and the Chinese are massively pushing their excess capacity into global markets. This collapse of a worldwide trading system is hitting Germany's export-oriented economy hard.

What can be done about it?

Generally, we must strengthen Europe. Europe is a vast internal market with considerable potential still to be tapped. It's unacceptable that America and China isolate themselves, investing hundreds of billions in their domestic locations, while we end up buying the resulting excess capacity as products in Europe. This requires protection and our own investments in infrastructure. The 500 billion euros from the federal government's investment package are there, and there are also big plans in Brussels.

What concrete form could this protection take for Europe?

At our industry conference in Berlin at the end of September, we discussed a new approach with around 250 works council members that we consider wise and feasible. We need provisions for more local content. Wherever billions of German taxpayers' money flow into modernizing and expanding infrastructure, it must ultimately be clear that a certain proportion of the services comes from Germany. And wherever European money flows, a certain percentage of European services must also be used. We need targeted funding for new businesses and new systems. For example, in the hydrogen economy, during the ramp-up of electromobility, and in key sectors such as the semiconductor industry. We've been promised a lot, but politicians must finally deliver on their promises.

Do we need to put the brakes on climate change?

No, there's no getting around decarbonization and electrification, but we need to approach the issue more pragmatically and flexibly. It's about adapting regulation to reality. We need competitiveness through change, not instead of change. We need to move forward with infrastructure. We must finally think European. Why, for example, is there still no comprehensive, adequate network of charging stations for electric cars in Europe? Overall, we need a comprehensive new industrial policy.

And if all of this doesn't happen...?

Then, with the decline of industry, we will also experience an intensification of political crises. With every well-paid industrial job lost, the longing for a simple, populist answer grows. If we don't stop this development, it will endanger social cohesion and thus our democracy.

What distinguishes the position of IG Metall from that of the employers?

We can't shake the feeling that the prevailing motto among companies and their associations is 'Last Man Standing.' In capitalist logic, everyone fights for themselves, and then they see who's left standing. Then the German metalworking entrepreneur says, 'What do I care about the German steel industry?' If I can obtain dumped steel at a low price from China, I can offer my products at a lower cost. That would be the beginning of the end. We are prepared to work with the companies on behalf of their employees. But we will never become the enablers of selfish interests. And on one point, the business associations must reckon with our fierce resistance: We will not allow the deep crisis to come at the expense of the weak. We will not accept social cuts. If the transformation of our economy is to succeed, people need to feel secure. Anyone who takes that away from them will only promote the right-wing extremists and exacerbate the misery.

Can we still stop this development?

Yes, I am deeply convinced of that. We need the courage and the will to tackle the problems – immediately, not at some point in the future. The federal government must act decisively now. The money from the investment package must finally flow into the right projects, within the framework of an overall strategy. We at IG Metall will be pushing for this in the coming months – and it will certainly not be without dispute.

What makes you so optimistic?

When I look into the companies and talk to our works councils and local representatives, I am always amazed at the substance that is there. We have talented individuals who are eager to develop innovative new products. Our conference in Berlin also demonstrated this: we have the ideas, we have the skilled workers, and we have what it takes to drive important industries forward, including aviation, rail technology, the broader mobility sector, as well as the expansion of wind and solar energy. We can develop green steel, explore battery technology, implement recycling and the circular economy, and leverage IT. The workforces in the companies sometimes have very concrete ideas about where things could go. Now it's also about tapping into the gold in our colleagues' minds. If the framework conditions are right and managers become more courageous again, then we will move the industrialized country forward again.

What's next?

As IG Metall, we will now make a significant and constructive contribution to the companies, regions, states, and federal levels. We will take a very decisive stance and fight for good solutions at all levels. ■

FOR A FRACTION IN MOROCCO

Development service providers are relocating jobs abroad on a large scale. IG Metall and works councils are resisting a sell-off by installments. New government policies are needed.

It is a distant place that influences the fate of German development service providers (EDL): 57, Boulevard Abdelmoumen, Casablanca, Morocco. That is its address. There, at the branch office of Berlin-based development service provider IAV, software specialists and engineers are driving innovation in the automotive industry. They do so at a particularly low cost. In Morocco, developers earn only around €14,000 per year – a fraction of what they would earn in Germany.

IAV customers, which include many major car manufacturers, are rejoicing. Trade unionists in Germany are clenching their fists in their pockets.

Because while jobs are being created in Morocco and other low-wage countries, employers in Germany are continuing to cut jobs. “The nightmare scenario is the end of German locations,” says Mark Bäcker. He is a works council member and deputy chairman of the supervisory board at IAV and is calling for help from politicians: “We need a meeting with the chancellor and safeguards for value chains in Europe.” Works councils at other companies and the IG Metall trade union are joining Bäcker’s call for help – and are fighting back against the ongoing bloodletting in the industry.

“We must secure jobs in Germany and Europe,” says Ulrike Goth, chair of the general works council at Capgemini. Among other things, the French group develops IT solutions for Mercedes. Capgemini has 30 locations in Germany and two in Morocco. Goth says that 500 jobs have already been lost in Germany. Capgemini employs more than 100 people in Morocco. “The perversion is that the employees for Morocco, for example, are trained here. So German developers are sawing off the branch they are sitting on.”

According to Goth, 20 percent of developers leave the German Capgemini team every year because there is hardly any use for them there anymore. “Most of them prefer to leave voluntarily at some point,” says Goth. Capgemini makes no attempt to retain them. Retraining within the company is rare. The corporation is still resisting a collective agreement that could provide for qualifications. “The mood among the workforce is at rock bottom,” says Goth. She realizes that the loss of jobs in development cannot be stopped at the company level alone. “The only thing that can help is a Europe with rules that keep jobs here.”

The crux of the matter is that some political conditions tend to favor the loss of jobs among development service providers in Germany rather than prevent it. For example, the Federal Ministry of Economics is promoting the market

entry of German SMEs from the automotive and supplier industry in Morocco, for example in the project “Automotive Industry for the Mobility of the Future.” The Chamber of Foreign Trade offers German companies support in areas such as business development. A free trade agreement between Europe and Morocco secures advantages for the North African country: no customs duties are levied, and EU support measures are not linked to any social standards, such as compliance with collective bargaining structures or minimum wages. A digital tax on such services is being discussed by the EU, but so far only a few member states have introduced it on a small scale, for example in France for advertising revenue from social media platforms.

In the short term, therefore, the framework conditions are unlikely to change. Nevertheless, IG Metall is taking action. “We will put pressure on politicians,” says Herbert

Rehm from the industrial policy department of the IG Metall executive board in Frankfurt. The union is pushing for social standards, such as the right to organize, to be enshrined in EU trade agreements.

Herbert Rehm sees Morocco’s success as a reflection of Germany’s failures. “For years, Morocco has been pursuing a much more active industrial policy than Germany and the EU,” says Rehm. “The country has deliberately built up an automotive cluster.” The state offers companies training subsidies, inexpensive building land, and customs exemptions for capital goods. The automotive industry now accounts for 22 percent of gross domestic product.

The more successful the automotive industry becomes in Morocco, the less demand there is likely to be for development services from Germany in the future. “Our customers have put us under pressure over the years,” says Bäcker. “They have used contract structures to force us to have an ever-increasing proportion of our development and engineering services carried out abroad.”

Initially, some of the development services in Morocco were carried out by external companies. Later, IAV and others established their own branches in low-wage countries. The proportion of outsourced services grew steadily. “Car manufacturers have development work done where it is cheapest,” says IAV works council member Bäcker. Just a year ago, IAV announced that it would cut around 1,500 jobs in Germany by the end of 2026. The goal of German car manufacturers is to leave only the project management of development service providers at German locations, says Bäcker. “Then we would only be a bridgehead to foreign countries.”

Andreas Schulte ■



Photo: Marcus Schwelusch

“The mood is at rock bottom.” Ulrike Goth is the chairwoman of the general works council at Capgemini Germany. The company is relocating jobs from Germany to Morocco.

THE FROG THING

Thanks to a strong IG Metall union, employees at the IT service provider Atos have successfully defended their collective bargaining agreement – and in doing so, have created a new, special collective agreement.

Do you want a day off? Or would you rather take the money? Only IG Metall members will have the choice at Atos in the future. This is stipulated in a collective bargaining agreement signed by the union, which provides an exclusive benefit for its members at the IT company. Exclusive means: Only members will continue to be entitled to a five-day reduction in working hours, which the employer would prefer to eliminate. Metalworkers will benefit from FROG in 2026 and 2027. The four-letter abbreviation stands for “Freizeit Oder Geld” (Free Time or Money).

The collective bargaining agreement is a unique document. Exclusive benefits for union members also exist in other companies, but they are still relatively rare. Employers are fighting tooth and nail against such benefits. From the perspective of unionized employees, this is logical: after all, it is they who, with their union dues, ensure that all employees in a company benefit from a collective agreement. And only a union can conclude one

The collective agreement is also notable because it emerged from a defensive situation: At the beginning of 2025, the Atos Group approached IG Metall and sought to access the employees’ funds. Collective agreements bind Atos and are derived from a collective agreement that applies to the metal and electrical industries. The group presented a veritable list of poisons. In addition to the collectively agreed wage increases in 2025 and 2026, Atos employees were to contribute all five days of reduced working hours and convert five percent of their salaries into a performance-related component. In total, the group wanted to save 80 million euros at the expense of the employees.

Not with us, said the metalworkers at Atos. “This poison list is no basis for productive discussions,” decided the collective bargaining committee headed by IG Metall negotiator Heidi Schroth – and set a condition for the start of open-ended negotiations: The one-off payment of €600 under the collective agreement, which Atos actually wanted to cancel, had to be made in any case.

After the employer had paid this entry ticket, the negotiations moved on to the next round. And by the evening of that day, not only was the poison list off the table, but the negotiation outcome had already been agreed upon. This included a moderate postponement of the collectively agreed wage increases in 2025 and 2026 by seven months and the frog issue, i.e., an agreement on five working day reductions in 2026 and 2027 exclusively for union members. The agreement also applies to employees not covered by collective agreements.

IG Metall also secured an agreement on “Future through Further Training” in the negotiations. This secured funding for training. A budget of €500,000 is available for development and retraining measures. Furthermore, five places were reserved for junior employees in a master’s program. The collective bargaining commission was pleased with

another result: Union representatives at Atos now have a collectively agreed right to digital access. This means that, since the collective bargaining agreement, they have been allowed, for example, to use the electronic communication media and video conferencing systems used in the company to maintain Contact with employees or to send messages to company email addresses. This, too, is real progress, as many companies make life difficult for union-active colleagues by denying them digital access. “The agreement greatly facilitates access to employees who, for example, work from home and are difficult for us to reach there,” explains IG Metall company representative Marco Schmidt. “Perhaps this agreement could even serve as a model for other companies.”

Throughout all of this, IG Metall focused on the greatest possible transparency. “We informed employees about every step and made the negotiation results subject to the approval of our members,” reports Heidi Schroth.

The member vote was overwhelming, with almost 94 percent in favor. And it also met with broad approval among those who were not yet members at the time. Ultimately, it convinced 750 colleagues to join IG Metall – because with a strong union at their side, they can achieve more.

Kathryn Kortmann/Bernd Kupilas ■



Works council elections

Power package for the election campaign

Where it says “Team IG Metall,” you can be sure that Team IG Metall is involved. The union supports its colleagues in all matters relating to the works council elections this Spring, with information and a wide variety of materials for the election campaign. For example, interested parties can find a podcast with several episodes on the topic of co-determination online at teamigmetall.de, or they can sign up for the newsletter. The digital center for successful company policy, on the other hand, is available exclusively to metalworkers (after login) in the members’ area. In addition to information for election committees, the action handbook, and the works council election campaign planner, there is also a media or video generator for creating your own personalized posters or short films for social media appearances. IG Metall has also developed small sharepics specifically for use on social media (see example on the right). These provide strong arguments for the establishment of practical works councils. The next update is sure to come.



Semiconductors

Active for fair chips

They are found in smartphones, televisions, and are used to power vehicles. Without semiconductors, almost nothing works anymore. They form the basis of all modern electronics and have long since become one of the key technologies. Companies such as Infineon, Bosch, TSMC and ASML are also increasingly producing these small

chips in Germany, aiming to reduce Europe’s dependence on Asian imports. However, good working conditions in the semiconductor industry are not a given. They require strong works councils that are prepared to engage in conflict and assert their co-determination rights. As part of its industry analysis, IG Metall took a closer look at German locations in the semiconductor industry and collected numerous examples of how works councils are shaping change through qualification and location development. IG Metall will

present the results at its semiconductor industry conference in Regensburg from November 24 to 26. This is already the second industry conference of the year; the first took place at the end of March. In spring 2024, IG Metall established a nationwide industry network. The aim is to bring employees in chip factories together to exchange ideas and ultimately to anchor more co-determination and good working conditions in these future-oriented industries.

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IT-Magazin

The industry magazine of IG Metall

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