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Germany

Germany: Alstom, staff cuts, closures, relocation

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One thing is indisputable: the management of Alstom, the French global manufacturer of rail technology, is sticking to its current strategy, which has been dictated by its major shareholders, and the effects of which can be seen in Mannheim-Käfertal.

This strategy is not entirely new, and is known as the 'dictatorship of numbers'. It was invented in 1981 by Jack Welch, then head of General Electric, whose motto for the company was 'Fix it, sell it or close it' in order to generate maximum profits from GE subsidiaries. Welch's nickname was 'Neutronic Jack', and he was a notorious anti-unionist.

In Mannheim-Käfertal, the disastrous consequences of this unscrupulous approach on the industrial site formerly belonging to Alstom Power are well documented. Just a few hundred metres away is the site of what is now Alstom Transport Deutschland. Around 1,000 people work there. Following the announcement of job cuts by the group's management in October, the fear of job losses is once again being felt by them.

A clear programme of cuts

The main points of Alstom's programme of cuts in Germany, known as the 'new German footprint', include the closure of the traditional wagon-building plant in Görlitz in March 2026, the closure of new train construction in Berlin-Hennigsdorf, the relocation of the drive technology division there to India, and the transformation of the plant into a service and IT site. The service activities are to be transferred from Kassel to Hennigsdorf. For Alstom Siegen - and indeed for all its employees in Germany - a reduction in staff numbers is planned, with figures not yet available.

Alstom Mannheim is also massively affected by the destructive plans of the group's management. For example, the repair business is to be transferred to Hennigsdorf, the production of new-build prototypes to Trápaga in the Basque Country, the development of new-build projects and the manufacture of 'Green Traction' prototypes to Tarbes in France, and the digital D&IS sector and the corresponding repair and maintenance activities to Hennigsdorf. The traction test laboratory, the only one of its kind in the Group, is about to disappear.

Employment agreement violated

As things stand, at least 140 jobs are set to be lost in Mannheim. The sale of the entire site is on the agenda. The remaining staff are to be transferred to an office building yet to be acquired, possibly outside the scope of the collective agreements of IG Metall Baden-Württemberg.

On 9 June 2023, Alstom and the IG Metall trade union concluded a 'collective agreement for the future' for approximately 9,600 employees at 13 sites in Germany. Among other things, it was intended to set the course for greater competitiveness in Germany and secure jobs and sites there for the next three years. This agreement was reached at the cost of forgoing contractual benefits. It is clearly worth no more than the paper it was signed on. This only confirms the rejection of this 'deal' by Alstom's workforce in Mannheim.

Resistance

The central works council of Alstom Germany and the Mannheim works council have both announced their opposition to the aggressive plans of the group's management. They openly question the 'arguments' put forward by management.

The chances of success for the resistance depend on a number of factors. Will we succeed in developing our own alternatives and active resistance not only at Alstom's various German sites, but also throughout Germany? Will we also succeed in organising resistance within the group at international level? Lastly, how can we create an alliance with the movement for the railway turnaround?

IG Metall is now called upon to present a combative perspective, also based on social and transport policy, beyond the routine negotiations on interest compensation and social plans. 'Our chance - Resistance' applies today more than ever.

[L'Anticapitaliste](#), 16 January 2025

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