

Covid pandemic - employment policy measures taken by companies in the VDV in Germany

Security for jobs, health and wages for the “heroes of everyday life” in the area of german urban public transport and railways



from
Matthias Rohrmann

Vice-Chair UITP BHRM Com/
VDV HR Committee
Deutsche Bahn AG/ AGV MOVE



The measures for employees of the public transport companies in Germany focus on 3 topics:

1. Health protection for employees and passengers in public transport (VDV and ver.di)
2. “Job guarantee” in the Corona crisis
3. "Security for wages"

There are also other activities:

4. Agreement "Together Against Corona"
(Deutsche Bahn)
5. Campaign on employees in the transport sector as "heroes of everyday life"
(Hamburger Hochbahn)

In the following article, the measures are briefly presented and practically illustrated using concrete examples.

1. declaration on health protection of the VDV and the trade union ver.di (04.04.2020)

The VDV and the ver.di trade union acted at short notice and prepared a joint paper on measures in the field of health protection. These include compliance with the 1.50m distance requirement applicable in Germany, cleaning of vehicles and individual hygiene measures. The recommendations are the basis for implementation across the public transport sector. They are a good examples of a fast and responsible cooperation between the social partners, which is particularly important in this exceptional situation.

2. Job guarantee

In fact, a job guarantee has been introduced in many areas. This was supported by government measures. In Germany it is possible to use „short-time working“ (“Kurzarbeit”). In doing so, the employer reduces the working time and accordingly the salary in those areas where there is a reduced need for work. The state (employment agency/ „Agentur für Arbeit“) then generally pays 60% of the missing part of the salary for employees and 67% for employees with children. The waiver of redundancies is another positive factor in the transport sector.

3. Security for wages

The short-time working instrument described not only security of the workplace, but also protection for wages. In the area of the public service there is an additional regulation that guarantees up to

95% of the net salary. The municipal employers' associations in Germany ("KAV") have now agreed with the union ver.di on a new collective agreement (so called "Covid-19 collective agreement") to enable short-time working in municipal facilities.

4. Together against Corona: Agreement between Deutsche Bahn and the unions EVG and GDL

Deutsche Bahn has concluded an "Together Against Corona" agreement for the rail system network of DB in Germany with the two unions EVG and GDL. This is valid for around 150,000 employees in Germany. It is about extensive support for parents in connection with daycare and school closure and the commitment to secure jobs and wages. "It is an important signal that we stand together in the crisis and go ahead in a collaboration for DB employees," said Martin Seiler, DB Human Resources Director. Important elements are special holiday for childcare (up to 15/ 5 days!) and, in the case of short-time work, an additional payment by the employer up to 100% of the net wage plus other measures.

5. "Everyday heroes in the public transport sector"

An example of this is the portrait of a Hamburg Hochbahn bus driver as part of a common campaign. It shows how work is organized in times of the corona pandemic and how workers are protected from infection. The bus driver reports that he considers his work to be important and useful. The positive feedback that he is receiving from passengers right now is motivating for him. The campaign helps to further improve the image of the industry and the professions.

In Germany, the lack of staff, both in the bus and in the rail sector, was and is a major problem. It is a strong signal from the industry that the social partners are acting together. With the measures described above, employers hope not only to get through the pandemic / crisis well with employees, but also to show the positive side of employment in the transport sector.

Matthias Rohrmann

Vice Chairman of the UITP BHRM Committee
Vice Chairman VDV HR Committee
Deutsche Bahn AG / Managing Director AGV MOVE

Matthias.rohrmann@deutschebahn.com