

## **Germany: IG Metall aiming for four-day week in steel industry.**

April 2023

IG Metall is considering a demand for a working time reduction (four-day work week) as one element of the whole package of demands in the upcoming steel collective bargaining campaign. This is happening 40 years after a lengthy strike action that gradually led to the introduction of the 35-hour working week first in the German steel industry, little bit later in the German metal industry.

The union, representing around 2.2 million members in several sectors<sup>1</sup>, is discussing a reduction of weekly hours from 35 to 32 hours a week without loss of pay for the approximately 80,000 workers of the German steel industry. The key objective will be to accompany the transformation of the steel industry with social progress. The negotiations are set to be held in November 2023 in Western Germany's main steel regions.

With a four-day week and more flexible working time accounts, companies will respond much better to the transformation and absorb the loss of work without workers having to fear for their jobs. The change can improve the quality of life and health the workers, make the sector more attractive to young people, share work and restrict the decline in employment. The employment in the German steel sector has been reduced by two thirds the last 50 years. The sector has gradually become more efficient and less labour-intensive. This process will continue with the conversion to CO<sub>2</sub>-free steel production.

The proposal covers the entire steel sector, and it aims to be adapted to both central services and production activities. The steel industry is best placed to implement a general reduction in working time: union density about 80 per cent.

If agreed, it is bound to take considerable time to be implemented. Some of the bigger steel companies have already introduced their own schemes of reduced working time, such as Thyssenkrupp, whose employees can now choose between 33 or 35 hours per week.

The Collective Bargaining Commission of IG Metall will discuss this issue first in a meeting on April 25. The demand will be adopted by the Commission on 6 September and a few days later finally approved by IG Metall's Executive Board.

**Edited by industriAll Europe.**

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<sup>1</sup> IG Metall is responsible for the sectors: Metal- and electrical Industry, steel industry, textile and garment industry, wood and furniture industry, several craft sectors and industrial related services sectors.