

# WHAT DO WE LORRY DRIVERS DEMAND?



What a shortage of lorry drivers can mean for society was seen in the UK at the end of 2021. Soldiers were deployed as lorry drivers to keep petrol at the pumps. Currently, there is a shortage of up to 100,000 lorry drivers in Germany. One important reason for this is: low pay for very hard work. This has to change!

HGV driving - for many, is a professional passion. But there is a lot to be done to fundamentally improve the situation. Many points have already been correctly written down by our colleagues in the lorry driver circles in their 2021 position paper. We, the lorry drivers in the collective **Betriebskampf**, would like to briefly outline our most important demands:

## ► EUROPE-WIDE MINIMUM WAGE!

When we look at wages, we drivers are still in the lower segment. This is because **wage dumping** is practised on a massive scale. People are systematically recruited from Eastern Europe and now also from the Philippines. They are separated from their families for weeks on end while they move thousands of tonnes of goods. But they usually earn much less than their German colleagues. The most effective measure against this is a **standardised minimum wage across Europe**. In Germany, this must once again be regulated in a generally binding collective labour agreement.

## ► REDUCE WORK INTENSITY! RESPECTFUL WORKING ENVIRONMENT!

Stress is the standard in our job. We are expected to transport more in less and less time, and on top of this, we are also being watched and **monitored by trackers**. All this comes at the expense of road safety and our health. We need a **reduction in labour intensity!** At the same time, of course, **on-call times must count as working hours**.

The situation at service stations needs to be improved, especially for long-distance drivers: us colleagues need a place to recover! **Free toilets and showers** must be the standard, as well as **good public transport connections** for travelling into the city.

## ► A FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT TRANSPORT POLICY!

An **intact environment is very important to us lorry drivers!** However, freight transport is still highly reliant on CO2 guzzlers rather than rail transport. In the future, the construction of direct rail connections must be mandatory in industrial areas and freight distribution centres! At the same time, we also need more lorry parking spaces in industrial estates to save us hours of searching for a parking space. To relieve congestion in city centres, we also need **better construction of bypass roads**.

**In society, the important role of us lorry drivers often goes unrecognised.** Instead, we are being associated with clichés: deafening noise and serious accidents.

We truck drivers have a clear stance on the matter: we drive respectfully; a human life is always more important than the goods we carry. Any distraction (alcohol, mobile phones, etc.) at the wheel is taboo. We communicate this to all our colleagues. Increased controls or more policing, as is sometimes demanded, do not help us in this respect.



However, several measures do: professional turning assistants are mandatory in all our trucks; better noise protection on the motorways; improvement of working conditions and support services for every driver in case of stress.

In 2021, 70 lorry drivers lost their lives in accidents at the end of traffic jams in Germany. In addition to fatigue and stress, such accidents are caused by the high traffic density, which repeatedly leads to dangerous tailbacks. Every colleague knows the queasy feeling at the end of a traffic jam. The vehicle in front drops the anchor, you brake too, and then you look anxiously in the mirror asking yourself - has the lorry behind me recognised the situation? Because we all know what happens when several 40-tonne trucks collide at the end of a traffic jam.

Whenever one of us dies at the end of a traffic jam, we ask ourselves: who will stop this madness? The answer is simple: We will! It can only be us! The fact that the police are not on our side is shown, among other things, by the completely excessive checks for additional lighting. There have been cases where the police have threatened our colleagues with "either you go to the MOT or your operating licence will be terminated and your sticker scratched off". Yet the MOT supposedly don't have enough staff to carry out enough heavy goods vehicle inspections.

But how can we as lorry drivers ensure greater road safety? An example: at a haulage company with 20 lorries, a driver discovers during the departure check that two tyres on his trailer are worn down. The boss says: "Drive anyway!" And now it comes down to our team spirit. Now we have to say: as long as the colleague's two tyres are not changed, none of us will move. The boss has no choice, he has to react and make sure that the trailer gets two new tyres. The same applies to time pressure or deadline pressure. The boss says: "You have to be in Ludwigsburg by 2 pm". As organised colleagues, we then say: "We'll be there when we get there!".

Our demands are not rooted in fantasy. Every day, we contribute to the billions in profits being generated, but these end up primarily in the pockets of the (major) hauliers and company bosses whose goods we transport or for whom we provide our services. An improvement in our situation is long overdue and possible - especially given the price explosion, we urgently need higher wages and better working conditions. We sit at a central lever of production and every colleague knows how quickly we could paralyse important parts of the country with just half a day of dawdling or even a work stoppage. Our colleagues in France have shown us just that. What do they have that we lack? An organised union of lorry drivers.



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