

Ford Info Letter 1-21, EN  
January 2021

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

## The current situation

**Latest news: Ford closes all 3 factories with 5,000 jobs in Brazil. Workers in struggle and broad solidarity**



The struggle against Ford's closure in Brazil led various unions to join together in a protest rally on Avenida do Povo in Taubaté on Wednesday 13/1/21. The metalworkers' union of São José dos Campos and CSP-Conlutas showed their solidarity with the workers of the car manufacturer. The closure of the plant in Brazil will lead to the dismissal of 5,000 direct workers and cause another 15,000 layoffs in the auto parts sector in the country. ([www.sindmetalsjc.org.br/n/5342/em-ato-contra-fechamento-da-ford-metalurgicos-aprovam-unidade-da-luta](http://www.sindmetalsjc.org.br/n/5342/em-ato-contra-fechamento-da-ford-metalurgicos-aprovam-unidade-da-luta))

## 2020 Review

Since the June 2020 Infobrief, the global economic and financial crisis, the structural crises in the conversion to electromobility, through digitalisation and through the continuing reorganisation of international production have deepened, in some cases by leaps and bounds, especially in connection with the Corona pandemic. The battle for the world automobile market has intensified enormously with the emergence of new imperialist countries and the balance of power has shifted. This is also a basis for the aggressive trade war and the general tendency towards imperialist war preparation. The centres of automobile production have shifted: the USA, Japan, Germany, Spain and France together accounted for 60% of world production in 2000, but only 31.3% in 2019. China, India and Brazil together accounted for 8% in 2000, but 36.2% in 2019. China remains by far the No. 1 market (new registrations in 2019: 21.4 million cars), followed by the USA (4.7 million - cf. 2017: 6.1 million!), Japan (4.3 million), Germany (3.6 million), India (2.9 billion), the UK (2.3 million) and France 2.2 million). Car workers in particular are facing massive attacks on jobs: Tens of thousands of jobs are

being cut, workers are being downright blackmailed into accepting severance packages, open layoffs are being threatened, closure of sites, etc.

The car companies are passing on the burden of the crisis (apart from compulsory holidays, minus accounts, short-time work etc.) with increasing announcements of tens of thousands of job losses, also through severance payments etc. (BMW 5,000; Daimler 15,000; Ford 20,000; Renault 20,000; MAN 6,000, Opel an additional 4,100). Among the suppliers, the effects of the world economic crisis are having an immediate impact; here, insolvencies, plant closures and mass layoffs have already begun.

However, workers are increasingly taking the offensive internationally. Trade unions and workers' organisations that participated in the 2nd International Automobile Workers' Conference are playing a leading role in some of the struggles. The International Automobile Workers' Coordination Group issued statements of solidarity with, among others, the struggle of the Daimler-Benz workers.

### **Corona Pandemic at Ford**

Ford has introduced compulsory masks in all plants worldwide since the start of production in May, for the entire factory site, in all areas and during all working hours. Everyone is provided with 4 masks per day, office areas with 2. Ford also manufactures these itself. In addition, there are plexiglass screens or reduced seating in some areas. At least 70% of the office areas (except those related to production) are home offices. These are good and necessary measures that should apply to every company. But at the same time, Ford has cut back on shift decertifications, not installed additional locker rooms and showers or slowed down the assembly line so that workplaces are further apart and colleagues can keep their distance better.

Colleagues abide by these rules and there are really few cases of corona so far, at least at Ford Cologne. Therefore, it must be a demand that all companies, production sites, etc. introduce a mask obligation with provision of the masks by the company and every possibility of equalising the time of work in order to be able to keep their distance.

What is the point of meeting only one friend/family member after work, but having masses of contacts on the way to work and at work!

### **Bordeaux (France)**

Several unions joined forces in a joint struggle and went on strike for 24 hours:

At the beginning of next year, the Getrag Ford Transmissions (GFT) joint venture between Ford and Magna will be dissolved.

In Blanquefort, in the Gironde region of France, Magna will buy Ford's shares and become the sole owner of the GFT plant, which produces transmissions for Ford.

Three unions decided to raise the alarm together because they were left in the dark about the future of the jobs and feared that the plant would close as early as 2023.

Since Wednesday 14 October, the Ford Transmissions (GFT) transmission plant in Blanquefort (Greater [u1] [u2] Bordeaux) has been on "alert". Trade unionists had come closer to this goal in June last year, long before the official announcement of the end of the GFT joint venture - which was already in the air - with a general mobilisation within the framework of an inter-union (CGT, CFTC, FO) that made it possible to make the workers' concerns known.

The CGT, FO, TCRC inter-union had called for a 24-hour strike on 10 September. The withdrawal of the CFTD and CFE-CGC is regrettable, otherwise they would have been even stronger.

The CGT, FO and TCRC have been pushing for the tender process to continue.

On 28 August it was announced that the GFT joint venture, based in Cologne, Germany and jointly owned by Ford Motor Company and the Canadian supplier Magna, would be dissolved.

The GFT plant in the Gironde region of France, which employs about 920 people, manufactures transmissions, with production expected to end in 2023. However, Magna has

not yet announced any new production projects, the unions noted.

However, since it will take two years to launch such a project and it is not yet known to what extent Magna will take over the entire plant, the union has decided to take a clearer stand and sound the alarm.

This concern is understandable, as the disappearance of the GFT joint venture, which was only a subsidiary in Blanquefort, will lead to the creation of an entirely new company with full powers.

In the meantime, Magna and Ford have informed the European Commission that the GFT joint venture will be dissolved and Ford will take over Magna's shares by the beginning of 2021 at the latest. More precisely, the transmission plant in Bordeaux will continue to produce manual transmissions for the Fiesta, Focus and Puma, as well as the transmission plant in Cologne. Here, once Magna and Ford have concluded negotiations, everything will probably happen very quickly in January. Colleagues who are still needed at the transmission plant are to stay. All the others will leave with severance pay, early retirement, transfers.

### **Cologne and Saarlouis (Germany)**

According to newspaper reports (Handelsblatt on 2.11.20) Ford has almost reached the target of the planned destruction of 10,000 jobs in Europe (20% of a total of 50,000 so far) with 9,000 jobs. In Cologne and Saarlouis, 5,000 jobs have been cut.

In September, Ford had last completely closed an engine factory in Bridgend, Wales, with about 1700 jobs.

The Cologne-based Ford boss Gunnar Herrmann recently said that Ford had now achieved its job reduction targets in Europe. However, the announcement to cut a further 1,000 jobs per year within the framework of "normal fluctuation" has not yet been withdrawn. Gunnar Herrmann said that there would be no further plant closures in Europe at the moment. However, the concrete future in Saarlouis is still open.

Ford has terminated the contract for the production of doors with the supplier "Faurecia Innenraum Systeme" as of 15 April 2021, Faurecia will lay off all employees in Cologne. This production will be taken over by Ford.

Production in the large plants, which were previously designed for 400,000 or 500,000 units per year, is to drop to 250,000 or 300,000 vehicles per plant. In Cologne, instead of the previous maximum of 1,400, only 960 Fiesta will be built per day from 2021. E-cars are to be built only 100,000 per year. instead of 240,000 Fiestas so far (180,00 from 2021).

Due to this further reduction in the number of units, Ford has decided to cut one shift in the final assembly hall Y and in the body shop. The colleagues will then work in door production from April.

But the reduction of one shift is not enough to compensate for this reduction, so a 4-day week is planned for the whole year through short-time work.

This shows how right and necessary the demand for a 30-hour week with full wage compensation is! In spring the next round of collective bargaining of IG Metall will take place. There has been a discussion about the reduction of working time for a long time, but until now the IG Metall leadership has only agreed on individual reductions of working time with partial wage compensation. What is needed, however, is a comprehensive collective agreement with an agreement for all!

Overall, Ford's plans for e-mobility focus on commercial vehicles in the USA and on "affordable" passenger cars in Europe. The initial focus for passenger cars is on hybrid vehicles in order to comply with EU emission limits.

According to current press reports, but not confirmed by Ford, Ford wants to develop and produce a new electric car in Cologne based on the MEB modular system from VW.

Although this would speak for the preservation of the Cologne location, it would not stop the massive job losses overall. Is this just a stalling tactic?

Many colleagues would like to fight against all these austerity plans and job cuts, but they expect the works council to organise this. But there is very little from the works council these days, even works meetings have not been held since March. The information from the works council always sounds combative, but it does not provide for any practical steps. If the colleagues want to do something, they can only organise it themselves, because in Germany there is only a very limited right to strike, unlike in France, for example!

### Success in lawsuit against forced transfer

In Cologne, Ford had used forced transfers as a method of bullying to blackmail workers into accepting severance pay and resigning themselves. A militant colleague, who had obviously been forcibly transferred for political reasons, took up the fight against this and was supported by a solidarity group. After the labour court rejected her claim for withdrawal of the transfer in the first instance. In the second instance, she was able to achieve a stage victory: the judge demanded further statements from Ford and adjourned the decision.

A rally of the Solidarity Circle took place again in front of the court, where solidarity greetings from Bordeaux and Valencia were also brought.

### **Valencia (Spain)**

At the end of September it was announced at the Almussafes plant near Valencia what will continue to be produced there:

A new 2.0 GDI engine is to be produced, which will be used to assemble the Transit Connect destined for the American market. This production is to run until at least 2024, when the end of the cycle of this van will be reached.

Ford is reversing the decision to move production of the Transit Connect for the American market to Mexico, it will continue to be made in Almussafes. This is over about 40,000 units. Connect will continue to be 100% manufactured in Almussafes.

Activities related to spare parts production will no longer be carried out from Valencia, the 8 workers concerned will be transferred.

ERTE (short-time work): the location of ERTE days will be changed. Some of the days with partial ERTE (60% of production) will become full ERTE (zero production on that day).

The STM union welcomes these decisions on continued production at Almussafes.

### **Venezuela**

Ford workers protest against starvation wage extortion:

A group of workers at the Ford Motors de Venezuela assembly plant in Carabobo denounced wage discrimination by the employer on Wednesday 9 December.

According to the protesters, the company is cutting a \$300 bonus for the 40 people who work at the factory.

The 130 people who are at home receive the minimum wage, but not the current one.

This means that this group is paid 400,000 bolivaros per month, which is not even enough for a kilo of maize flour.

The company has not assembled vehicles for some time, but continues to import units and car parts.

More than 110 workers have been in a state of special suspension for three years, receiving only minimum wage and no social benefits.

Edgar Yépez, the general secretary of the assembly plant union, said it was impossible to survive on less than one dollar a month.

Yepez considered that this was discrimination aimed at pressuring the few suspended workers left to resign voluntarily. "There used to be more than 2,000 suspended workers and now there

are only a little more than 100 of us left.