



GM IBM EMEA
Sra. Marta Martínez Alonso
Sta. HORTENSIA 26-28, Building 1
28002 Madrid
Spain

Brussels, 19 April 2021

Dear Ms Martínez Alonso,

On behalf of UNI Europa, the European services union, I would like to send you a message of our national trade union affiliates represented in IBM across Europe.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Oliver Roethig'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Oliver Roethig
Regional Secretary

Open letter to IBM: Restructuring plans at IBM show disrespect to European workforce

We are European trade union leaders united in UNI Europa, representing services workers in the ICT sector throughout Europe.

In these historic and very special times when the world is challenged by a global pandemic, society experiences a negative impact both economically, socially and as regards human health.

Global companies have a special Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in such times, avoiding or minimizing layoff actions in order to support society. This also applies to IBM, a company that normally strives to maintain a high level and standard of CSR.

1 Mass layoffs at IBM

However, IBM has chosen to ignore this and to start a restructuring process that leads to an unseen level of mass layoffs throughout Europe and beyond.

- Naming a mass layoff internally “SUNRISE” is a disrespect to the many thousands of employees in Europe who have served IBM for many years and are now the victim of IBM’s zeal to satisfy the company’s shareholders.
- Proper qualitative information should have been given to all employees but little or no transparency has been shown in the process of the mass redundancy and employees have been left uncertain about their future employment status. As trade unions we demand an appropriate involvement in the process, that includes information and negotiations with workers’ and union representatives.
- We are questioning the financial reasons for the layoffs provided by IBM. Was the amount of work decreasing? Was there a decrease in the number of customers, or was the situation a consequence of Corona? Was the economy affected in a negative way? None of this was the case.
- Involvement of workers’ representatives and trade unions should also be the case regarding negotiations for social plan agreements for employees affected in all countries – also in those countries where the national legislation does not provide an obligation for such negotiations. Such an agreement should set at least minimum standards and take relevant aspects into account such as the age, years of employment and salary of the affected employees.
- The victims of the job cuts are the many thousands hard working IT-professionals laid off by IBM. But what about the remaining colleagues that are now in a position where they must work even harder to comply with the requirements from the customers of IBM? In social plan agreements, there should also be guarantees for those employees that will remain in the company addressing e.g., their workload, working conditions and up/reskilling. Instead of laying off experienced employees, IBM should rather invest in the upskilling and employability of the existing workforce.

2 NewCo spinoff

The upcoming new challenge is the IBM split into two separate entities. We expect that the process will respectfully involve the workers representatives and we will follow the process closely on the European level to support our representatives. We will coordinate and unite our efforts to the benefit of the IT Professionals being part of the IBM future in the continuing company and in the New Co.

- We ask IBM to provide clarity and transparency towards all employees, also to those employees in scope for being transferred to NewCo as early as in 2021.
- We expect IBM not to use the transfer to NewCo as an excuse to lower wages and working conditions for employees.
- We expect IBM to establish structures for workers' participation, negotiate collective agreements and to set up an EWC for NewCo.
- We ask IBM to provide their employees with a sustainable and long-term strategy for quality jobs.

Signatories:

- Oliver Röthig, Regional Secretary, UNI Europa, Belgium
- Stefaan Decock, General Secretary, ACV-Puls, Belgium
- Felipe Van Keirsbilck, General Secretary, CNE, Belgium
- Alexandre Liefoghe, National Officer, ACLVB / CGSLB, Belgium
- Jan Meeuwens, National Officer, SETCa-BBTK, Belgium
- Valentin Stoyanov, President, TUFC, Bulgaria
- Antonis Chrysostomou, President, EPOET, Cyprus
- Kent Petersen, President, Finansforbundet, Denmark
- Simon Tøgern, Chairman, HK Privat, Denmark
- Niels Bertelsen, Federal President, PROSA, Denmark
- Heidi Nieminen, President, PAU, Finland
- Antti Hakala, National Officer, Pro, Finland
- Wolfgang Zeiher, Deputy Secretary IBM European Works Council, ver.di, Germany
- Florian Hagenmiller, National Officer, ver.di, Germany
- Bert Stach, UNI Europa EWC Coordinator for IBM, ver.di, Germany
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- Ian McArdle, National Officer, CWU, Ireland
- Yaki Haluzi, Chairman, Histadrut, Israel
- Željko Burić, President, STCG, Montenegro
- Christopher Beckham, President, HK, Norway
- Eirik Bornø, Vice-President, Negotia, Norway
- Cristiana Matei, President, Antic & SLTC Unions, Romania
- Andrej Zvasta, Chairman, ZO ECHOZ uniJA, Slovakia
- Martin Linder, Chairman, Unionen, Sweden

- Miriam Berger, National Officer, syndicom, Switzerland
- Mark Serwotka, General Secretary, PCS, United Kingdom
- Mike Clancy, General Secretary, Prospect, United Kingdom
- Mike Eatwell, National Officer, Unite, United Kingdom
- Paddy Lillis, General Secretary, Usdaw, United Kingdom