

Press Release

Training is teamwork! Overhead line installation companies establish Germany-wide consortial training initiative 'AOLA'

The omnipresent shortage of skilled labour is also affecting the rail industry. The German government's coalition agreement set a 75 per cent electrification target for 2030. Presently, around 62 per cent of the German rail network is electrified, and there is ongoing general refurbishment, construction, and expansion of high-performance corridors across the network. Hence, there is an urgent demand for new and well-trained employees throughout the industry.

Berlin and Langenhagen, 02 September 2024. In view of the increasing demand for new electrification to serve expansion needs, new construction projects and modernisation of the German rail network in the years ahead, DB Bahnbaugruppe GmbH, EUROPTEN Deutschland GmbH, Furrer + Frey Deutschland GmbH, Heicon Service GmbH + Co KG, Rail Power Systems GmbH, SPITZKE SE, SPL POWERLINES GERMANY GMBH, STRABAG Rail Fahrleitungen GmbH and the German Railway Industry Association (VDB) have joined forces with the Training Initiative for Overhead Line Equipment (AOLA). The aim of the companies is to create joint conditions in order to offer further vocational training and qualifications for their employees on a joint basis. AOLA aims to qualify skilled workers on a joint basis, and to provide them with further training for the profession – with an additional year of training for prospective overhead linesmen that have already completed their vocational training.

The companies have now been cooperating for over a year on the development of teaching and training content, the planning of training modules and the preparation of further training for employees. In the first year of the initiative, each of the equal partners sends two trainees from all corners of Germany – and makes learning materials, training centres and trainers available for the courses. "We need to break new ground in order to attract skilled workers and keep them in the industry in the long term," explains Dr. Michael Bernhardt – VDB Vice President for Infrastructure. "This cooperation is a good example of how the industry can maximise potential and create synergies for well-trained employees. Training is teamwork."

On 2 September 2024, 16 employees are to commence the one-year training course to become certified linesmen in Langenhagen near Hanover. There are also plans to create a mutually recognised industry standard, the Catenary Industry Education Standard (CIES), and to further promote and qualify employees. The number of trainees and participating companies is also to be continuously increased.

Ralf Hickethier, spokesperson for the AOLA initiative, states: "Together we can make the world a 'cooler' place than it is today! This training initiative lays the foundations to train young people as overhead linesmen. In the future, these linesmen will contribute to safe electric train operation and help to create a sustainable and climate-friendly transport system."

An initiative by