

German Industrial Workers Prepare to Go on Strike



Berlin, January 8 (RHC)-- Germany's largest union IG Metall says tens of thousands of workers in the metals and engineering industries will stage strikes at firms across the country beginning this week to demand pay raise. Juergen Wechsler, head of the country's influential union in Bavaria, said in a statement: "We will build pressure with our first wave of warning strikes so the employers finally show some movement in negotiations."

IG Metall pushes for a 6-percent raise this year for nearly 3.9 million workers in the sector. The demand was rejected by the employers who described it as excessive. They so far have offered to raise wages by only 2 percent as well as a 200-euro (\$241) one-off payment in the first quarter.

IG Metall, which also demands a shorter working week, is entitled to stage walkouts after an agreed no-strike period ended on December 31. The labor union fired the opening salvo last week by urging staff at Volkswagen's Porsche sports car brand to walk off their shifts for about an hour the next day as part of its campaign. More actions are to follow ahead of another round of pay talks due on January 11.

"Should there still be no progress then, we will add more warning strikes and decide whether to go for 24-hour strikes," said Knut Giesler, head of IG Metall in North Rhine-Westphalia.

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