

Train Drivers in Germany Vote to Go on Strike



Berlin, October 3 (RHC)-- Train drivers from the German GDL union have voted overwhelmingly to stage an open-ended strike as they continue their fight for higher wages and better working conditions.

A GDL spokeswoman said members of the union balloted the decision on Thursday afternoon, and 91 percent of the voting members approved carrying out the strike action. No date or duration for the walkout has been announced, but GDL chief Claus Weselsky said there would be no stoppage before midnight Sunday.

The GDL is demanding a five-percent salary increase for the drivers and two hours less work per week. However, Deutsche Bahn's management has offered a 1.9-percent pay rise. Hundreds of long-distance and commuter trains across Germany were also brought to a standstill on September 6th, when train drivers went on strike.

The three-hour national walkout was meant to put pressure on German railway company Deutsche Bahn to address the train drivers' grievances. On Tuesday, pilots at the flag carrier of Germany, Lufthansa, staged a 15-hour strike on long-haul flights, over an ongoing dispute regarding early retirement.

The move forced the German airline company to cancel at least half of its intercontinental flights, affected thousands of passengers and cost Lufthansa tens of millions of euros.

The Vereinigung Cockpit, the union representing pilots at Lufthansa, has been in months of negotiations with the airline over plans to change the early retirement policy.

The union is demanding reinstatement of a benefit that formerly allowed pilots to choose early retirement at 60 with partial pay. Lufthansa wants all fit pilots to keep flying until the age of 65.

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