

Europe facing strikes and protests over cost of living

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A view shows the new banner on the European Union building as people demonstrate against high energy prices in Europe, during a European leaders summit, in Brussels, Belgium (Photo by Reuters)

Brussels, November 9 (RHC)-- Soaring inflation and high energy prices have sparked mass protests and strikes across Europe, raising concerns over political turmoil in the continent. In Britain, more than 70,000 university staffers will strike at 150 universities for three days in November over pay, according to the University and College Union (UCU).

Workers at London's Heathrow Airport will also walk out in the run-up to the soccer World Cup this month in London over demands for better pay, Britain's Unite union said last week.

In France, a strike is continuing at TotalEnergies' (TTEF.PA) Feyzin oil refinery, a CGT power union official said.

Unions across Germany are also demanding higher wages in light of rising inflation. German trade union IG Metal Kueste said it had called on several thousand workers to strike on Tuesday at 15 sites, including at Airbus in Hamburg.

In recent days, thousands of people in Spain packed Madrid's landmark Plaza Mayor Square to demand higher pay, in the country's first mass protest since the start of the cost-of-living crisis.

And in Austria, metal workers secured on Friday an annual pay rise of more than 7% on average, above the 6.3% inflation rate for the negotiating period.

The negotiations are seen as a bellwether for other sectors in Austria, which has a strong tradition of collective bargaining and annual negotiated pay increases that generally avert the threat of strikes.

Since the beginning of Russia's military campaign in Ukraine in late February, disruption in supply chains have led to higher fuel and food prices across the European Union countries, driving inflation to record levels and causing the cost of living to soar.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA) said in a report last Thursday that the continent must act immediately to prevent a shortage of natural gas next year. The agency said the shortfall would occur if Russia stopped pipeline deliveries completely and China stepped up its imports of liquefied natural gas, which Europe has relied upon to replace Russian supplies.

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