

# *German Train Drivers Go on Strike*

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Berlin, May 21 (RHC)-- The union representing German train drivers has announced the commencement of an open-ended industrial action as attempts to settle ongoing disputes with rail operator Deutsche Bahn fail.

The German Train Drivers' Union, GDL, which represents 20,000 drivers, announced that freight trains and passenger train drivers have walked off their jobs and did not specify an end date for the strike. GDL only promised to give a 48-hour notice ahead of the final day.

This is German train drivers' ninth strike in just 11 months over unsatisfactory working conditions. They are demanding wage increases from their employer, Deutsche Bahn. The GDL, which demands a five-percent pay increase as well as shorter working hours, is also pushing for the right to represent all on-board personnel, including train stewards, rather than just train drivers.

Claus Weselsky, the head of the GDL, said the fresh strike would "last a little longer" than the previous stoppage on May 4, in which more than 19,000 train drivers, switch-yard engineers and conductors halted work through May 10 for a total of 127 hours.

Train drivers staged several walkouts last year, causing major transport disruptions that affected over 5.5 million people. The industrial action cost the German economy over 150 million euros (USD160 million) from September to November last year. Each daily strike can cost Germany's economy 100 million euros

(USD 111 million).

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