

German Strikes Cause Major Travel Disruptions



Berlin, October 16 (RHC)-- German train passengers face travel disruptions as members of train drivers' union call for a strike over pay disputes. For the second time in a week, the GDL, Germany's main train driver union, called for a nationwide strike on Wednesday.

The driver's industrial action, which is in dispute with state-owned rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB), has caused major traffic disruptions as passengers have been forced to travel by buses, cars and planes.

The train strike began at 1200 GMT on Wednesday and was due to run until 0100 GMT on Thursday. The GDL is calling for a five-percent salary rise for its drivers and the reduction of their working hours from 39 to 37 per week. The DB has labeled the strike as "completely incomprehensible" and has offered a conditional two-percent pay rise.

In a separate dispute on Wednesday, pilots at Lufthansa's low-cost subsidiary, Germanwings, are set to go on strike due to a long-running dispute with the German flag carrier's management over retirement benefits.

According to the Vereinigung Cockpit (VC), the union representing about 5,400 Lufthansa pilots, the 12-hour industrial action is scheduled to take place on Thursday between 1000 GMT and 2159 GMT, affecting all domestic Germanwings flights.

The development comes as an earlier six-hour strike at Germanwings two months ago reportedly cost Lufthansa over 10 million euros. Lufthansa pilots have already staged six walkouts this year, which canceled hundreds of flights and stranded thousands of passengers.

The pilots want Europe's largest airline to keep their current retirement scheme, under which Lufthansa pays a transition payment to pilots who want to retire early at the age of 55.

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