

Port strikes in Germany, France disrupting cargo movement



*Port workers in Germany and France are deadlocked in negotiations over wages and pension reforms.
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Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe | Jun 13, 2024, 11:40 AM EDT

Rolling one-day transport worker strikes in the main German ports of Hamburg and Bremerhaven and the inland port city of Bremen are heavily impacting container handling and rail transport in the country.

German transport union ver.di said seaport workers in Bremerhaven went on strike Thursday following the breakdown of second-round wage talks with the Central Association of German Seaport Operators (ZDS). That followed Bremen workers downing tools on Wednesday and Hamburg dockers striking last Friday.

“Employees need a significant increase in their wages to be able to pay for the increased cost of living,” ver.di negotiator Maren Ulbrich said in a statement. “With the

The offer from ZDS was not disclosed.

Metrans, the multimodal subsidiary of Hamburger Hafen und Logistik (HHLA), Hamburg's main terminal operator, said all its services have experienced delays "that may persist."

"During the strike ... the handling of import and export trains will also be suspended, and therefore, unfortunately, it is necessary to expect delays again for the entire stated period and even after the resumption of operations," Metrans told customers in an advisory Thursday.

ver.di is calling for a €3 increase in hourly wages as of June 1, as well as a corresponding increase in shift bonuses, including making up for the lack of an increase in shift bonuses in the 2022 collective bargaining agreement.

"The current employer's offer does not mean any real wage growth for the employees and the social component is also absolutely inadequate," the union said, with a third round of talks scheduled for June 17 and 18.

In March 2023, strike action by unions representing transport workers in Germany brought the country to a standstill.

French ports are also facing labor disruption; transport unions launched a 24-hour strike on Thursday and have scheduled additional one-day walkouts for June 21 and June 25. Workers are also holding four-hour walkouts on three days during each week this month.

The strikes, called by the Union of Transport and Logistics Companies of France, are in protest over pension reform that has increased the statutory retirement age in France.

Industrial disputes have become more common in Europe since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, with soaring energy and food prices increasing interest rates and wage hikes unable to match the rising cost of living.

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