

# Lufthansa breaks off talks with ground-staff union

August 13 2020

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German airline Lufthansa said Thursday it had broken off negotiations with the Verdi union on cutting ground staff wages, warning that forced redundancies may be unavoidable as the pandemic wreaks havoc on the travel industry.

Verdi union's deputy chairwoman Christine Behle called Lufthansa's

walkout, after 20 rounds of talks, "a slap in the face" for 24,000 ground crew members.

Europe's largest airline by passengers said it was negotiating with all employee groups "to stabilise the [company](#)" amid the collapse in air traffic because of the coronavirus crisis.

But without union backing for its proposals, forced redundancies "can no longer be avoided", it warned.

The flag carrier, which received a 9 billion euro (\$10.7 billion) government bailout to stave off bankruptcy, announced in June that 22,000 jobs would have to go.

Although it initially said it would use schemes for shorter work hours and other crisis arrangements to avoid redundancies, the company said at its earnings announcement earlier this month this was now "no longer realistically within reach for Germany."

Savings of 20 percent in personnel costs are needed, Lufthansa said, which could cut staff annual gross salaries as much as 18 percent.

In exchange, Lufthansa said it would offer "the exclusion of compulsory redundancies for the duration of the crisis measures."

But Behle said the proposed cuts were "not bearable".

"The income losses demanded by Lufthansa went so far that employees who had worked for the company for years would be pushed to the edge of the subsistence level," she said.

The union said it had offered 600 million euros in contributions to cost cutting so far.

Behle said that the government should step in and "use its influence on the company to protect employment and maintain Germany's air transport infrastructure."

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Citation: Lufthansa breaks off talks with ground-staff union (2020, August 13) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-08-lufthansa-ground-staff-union.html>

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