

Hundreds of flights axed as German airport staff strike

February 17 2023, by Jean-Philippe LACOUR



Fraport urged passengers not to travel to Frankfurt airport because of the strike, and switch to rail journeys when possible.

Tens of thousands of travelers faced flight delays and cancellations Friday as workers at eight airports in Germany went on strike for better

pay.

The full-day walkout, called by the Verdi trade union, prompted Germany's biggest carrier Lufthansa to cancel more than 1,300 flights alone at its busiest hubs, Frankfurt and Munich.

"The strike is expected to have a strong impact, especially on domestic air traffic, ranging from delays to cancelations and even a partial shutdown of air traffic," Verdi said in a statement.

German airport association ADV called the strike action "completely unacceptable", saying it would affect around 295,000 passengers and more than 2,300 flights in total.

"Solutions must be found at the negotiating table and not at the expense of passengers," ADV chief Ralph Beisel said in a statement.

Airports in the cities of Bremen, Dortmund, Hamburg, Hanover, Leipzig and Stuttgart were also affected.

Verdi is currently leading negotiations for public sector workers, airport ground crew and aviation security staff, demanding better pay at a time when workers are seeing their incomes eroded by high inflation.

The next round of talks with employers is scheduled for February 22-23.

Verdi is seeking a 10.5-percent salary hike or at least 500 euros (\$530) a month more for public sector workers, and higher bonus payments for airport staff working evenings and holidays.

Employers have rejected the demands.

Verdi chief Frank Werneke said its members were ready to ramp up the pressure with more strike action "if necessary".

"The willingness to take action is large," he told the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung.



LH	900	LONDON - CANCELLED	08:00		1
LH	3680	BERLIN HBF - GOETTINGE	08:09		1
EN	8060	GRAZ - CANCELLED	08:10		1
EN	8842	TURIN - CANCELLED	08:10		1
LH	824	KOPENHAGE - CANCELLED	08:10		1
LH	1086	MARSEILLE - CANCELLED	08:10		1
X3	6102	HURGHADA - DELAYED	08:10	08:10	2
LH	096	MUENCHEN - CANCELLED	08:15		1
DE	1408	LANZAROTE - DELAYED	08:20	08:20	1
MLD	864	CHISINAU - CANCELLED	08:20		2
SQ	026	NEW YORK - CANCELLED	08:20		1
LH	3500	DUESSELDORF HBF	08:21		1
LH	1028	PARIS - CANCELLED	08:25		1
H	1058	NIZZA - CANCELLED	08:25		1
H	1364	KRAKAU - CANCELLED	08:25		1
H	3532	AACHEN HBF - KOELN HBF	08:31		1
L	3460	MUENCHEN - NIERNBERG - W	08:34		1

The strike brought Frankfurt airport to a near standstill.

Germany has been hit by several strikes in recent weeks.

Industrial action at Berlin Brandenburg airport last month led to around 300 flights being scrapped or rescheduled.

Postal workers, public transport employees and nursery staff have also staged walkouts as they grapple with a cost-of-living squeeze in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine.

IT outage

Frankfurt and Hamburg airports urged passengers not to visit them at all on Friday. Those traveling within Germany were advised to switch to train journeys.

Munich airport scrapped more than 700 planned landings and departures.

Verdi said the nationwide strike would not impact flights delivering aid to earthquake-hit Syria and Turkey, or planes carrying leaders attending the annual Munich Security Conference.

At Frankfurt airport, just 12 flights remained on the board out of the 1,000 initially scheduled.

"It's very quiet, there are hardly any travelers in the terminals," a spokesman for airport operator Fraport told AFP.

The strike caps a chaotic week for air travel in Germany.

Lufthansa was forced to cancel or delay flights on Wednesday because of a major IT outage caused by construction work in Frankfurt.

The next day, several German airports saw their websites disrupted by a suspected cyber attack.

German news outlet Der Spiegel said a group of Russian hackers had claimed responsibility for the attack.

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