

Strike over pay paralyzes rail, air travel in Germany

BERLIN — Trains, planes and public transit systems stood still across much of Germany on Monday as labor unions called a major one-day strike over salaries in an effort to win inflation-busting raises for their members.

The 24-hour walkout - one of the biggest in decades - also affected cargo transport by rail and ship, as workers at the country's ports and waterways joined the strike.

Many commuters opted to drive to work, causing some delays on the roads, while those who could worked from home.

Unions are seeking a pay increase of at least 10.5% and have dismissed offers from employers of about 5% over two years plus one-off payments.

High inflation also seen elsewhere last year has hit many workers hard, said Ulrich Silberbach of the Civil Service Federation.

"We have recorded drops in real wages and these need to be balanced out," he told reporters in Berlin, adding that some of his union's members in larger cities are having to apply for state benefits to afford rent.

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