

Air travel strikes

CLEAR RULES NECESSARY

Cancelled business appointments, shattered vacation dreams, or missed family visits: The recent strike waves in Germany's aviation industry have put a severe strain on passengers, companies, and the German economy. Strikes were once considered the sharpest weapon in the struggle for wage agreements, but now they seem to become the standard. Legislators should regulate the right to strike for critical infrastructures accordingly.

In Germany, practically everything is regulated by law, except the right to strike. The courts have the right to decide on the proportionality and legality of strike actions on the basis of judicial law. This leads to considerable legal uncertainty, as judicial rules on labour disputes are case-specific and decisions are often only made at the last moment.

Learning from other EU countries

Our European neighbours demonstrate that this can be done differently. Several European countries have established legal rules for strikes. Spain in particular can serve as a role model in this regard: A triad of notification periods, emergency service agreements, and a mandatory arbitration procedure ensure proportionality in the right to strike. Politics, trade unions, and companies should jointly examine the Spanish model and derive regulatory principles for labour disputes in Germany.

16 strike waves in three months

Otherwise, developments like those we experienced in the first quarter of 2024 will be repeated in the future: In Germany, there were a total of 16 waves of strikes in the aviation sector in the first three months of the year. For the Lufthansa Group alone this meant a loss of revenue of more than 350 million euros. Unlike in the manufacturing industry, this loss of revenue cannot be compensated for by subsequent extra shifts. A flight cancelled due to a strike cannot be made up and is therefore a lost flight.

Arbitration before strikes

Due to the "new normal" in negotiation tactics, Germany is at risk of falling even further behind in international competition. Confrontation instead of cooperation jeopardizes growth and prosperity. That is why a mechanism is needed that focuses on negotiations – and ensures that only if negotiations ultimately fail, strikes can be called. Especially in areas of critical infrastructure, such as the aviation industry, the following must apply: arbitration before strikes!

Strikes in the first quarter of 2024



Hundreds of thousands

of passengers affected



350 million euros

in lost revenue for the Lufthansa Group alone