

# Workers Struggles: Europe

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## **German bank workers continue strike action**

On April 15 and 16, more than 20,000 German bank staff took strike action, continuing their ongoing dispute with employers. On April 15, 6,000 bank employees struck in Berlin, closing around 400 bank branches. In the state of North Rhein-Westphalia, 4,000 staff took strike action. The HBV and DAG public sector unions called the strikes.

On April 16, more than 7,000 bank staff struck in Frankfurt, Germany's financial centre. A demonstration of 4,500 was held in the banking district of the city on the same day. In Hamburg, 3,500 bank workers went on strike, resulting in the closure of around 40 percent of branches.

The dispute is over a pay disagreement and the workers' refusal to accept employers' demands that Saturday become a standard working day. A spokesman for the HBV said, "It is not negotiable that Saturday remains a work-free day in the banking sector".

The banking employers association has recommended that member banks implement a 3.1 percent pay rise and a one-off 350 mark payment for the first quarter of 1999. The HBV and the DAG have called for a pay rise of around six percent.

## **Cypriot dock workers strike over work rule changes**

Two hundred fifty dock workers struck at two major ports in Cyprus for 24 hours on April 15. The workers are demanding that employers sign a new contract that does not include 24-hour around-the-clock shifts. The dock workers struck at the ports at Limassol and Larnaca.

The employers organisation, the Cyprus Ports Authority (CPA), is planning to bring in new employment terms based on the ports working 24 hours a day. The CPA declared the strike illegal on the basis

that the Labour Ministry mediator had not declared a stalemate in negotiations before the workers took action.

## **Romanian workers strike throughout industry**

On April 19, tens of thousands of Romanian workers struck to demand better pay and conditions. Workers employed in public transport, the mines, utilities, ports, healthcare and other industries took action for several hours. It was reported that 20,000 miners and other workers had struck in Maramures county near the Ukrainian border. A further 80,000 workers downed tools at electricity plants and oil refineries in central Prahova.

The trade unions organising the action have threatened to call an indefinite strike unless their demands are met. Among the union demands are for wages to be indexed to prices and changes in the budget.

Dumitru Costin, president of the BNS union bloc, said, "This strike is directed against the people running this country. Workers, investors, pensioners--everyone is unhappy with this government. Who is it working for?"

## **Explosion kills three more Ukrainian coal miners**

A methane explosion killed three coal miners in the eastern Donbass region of the Ukraine on April 15. The miners died when a lethal mixture of methane gas and coal dust ignited at the Krasnolimanskaya mine.

These deaths bring the number of miners killed in the Ukraine this year to 64. The coal mining ministry said that most of the deaths were due to antiquated equipment and inadequate safety measures. Last year 358 Ukrainian coal miners died at work due to accidents and explosions.

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