La Kanzlei

Strikers pay a high price for their protest in France

Arbeitsrecht



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No country is as famous for its strike culture as France.

While the staffs in the emergency rooms or the fire brigade has been on strike for several months, railway employees have now been shutting down all rail traffic since the beginning of December 2019 to protest against the planned pension reform.

A fact that many abroad doesn't even know: The striking workers and civil servants often forgo their entire income.

In contrast to Germany, in France the trade unions don't normally have efficient strike funds.

In fact, the CFDT is virtually the only French national interprofessional union with a strike fund financed by part of the membership fees: For a strike lasting more than 7 hours, a full-time worker on strike who has been a CFDT member for at least 6 months receives €7.30 per hour in comparison with the minimum gross hourly wage that amounts €10.15.

Otherwise, employees and civil servants are dependent on donations. The French population is generous in this respect; depending on the strike, six to seven-figure sums are collected to support the strikers. But in the end, the strikers often only receive a few euros from this. In 2018, for example, a total of almost 1.2 million euros was collected during the railway workers' strike, of which each striker received only 7 to 15 euros per day of strike at the end.

It is therefore unclear how long the current protests can continue under these conditions. However, the strikers make a resolute impression.

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