

Hungary Audi workers in rare strike over wages

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Workers at the German car giant Audi's plant in Hungary called a one-week strike Wednesday over a wage dispute, a rare case of industrial unrest in an economy that relies on the automotive sector.

Audi, one of Hungary's largest exporters, employs some 13,000 staff in the western city of Győr where it has made engines since 1994.

Car-making accounts for almost a third of Hungary's total industrial output, and around 20 percent of exports.

The plant's largest union - the 9,000-member AHFSZ - said the strike would last from Thursday to January 31 and affect all parts of the facility.

AHFSZ leaders told local media that talks with management would continue during the strike, but that it could be extended if no agreement is reached.

Some 4,000 of the workforce at the Audi plant downed tools for a two-hour "warning strike" last week.

Talks over 2019 wage levels began last September, with workers seeking an 18 percent wage increase.

According to AHFSZ, workers at a Mercedes factory in Kecskemet, central Hungary, received a 22 percent wage increase for 2019 without having to resort to strike action.

Since Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government tightened strike rules in 2012, industrial action has been rare in Hungary.

After new changes to labour laws were passed by parliament in December, unions across the economy have threatened coordinated [strike](#) action.

That legislation increases the amount of overtime employers can demand from workers and has been dubbed a "slave law" by unions, [political](#)

[parties](#), and civil groups who have held a series of street demonstrations in protest.

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