

EasyJet in talks with German govt for virus aid

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British budget carrier EasyJet is in talks with the German government for aid to manage the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, its CEO said Thursday in an interview with a German business magazine.

"Negotiations are proceeding constructively," Johan Lundgren told the business weekly Wirtschaftswoche.

"We have a large presence in Germany, created healthy competition before the crisis and invested a lot of money in it. This should be reflected in the scope of the aid," he added.

Questioned by AFP, an EasyJet spokeswoman said: "As a pan-European airline, as you would expect, we have regular contact with all governments in the countries where we operate and employ people around the support measures available to all eligible companies."

"No formal request for funding been made. We continue to talk to all of these governments on an ongoing basis," the spokeswoman said.

Germany's economy ministry confirmed to AFP that EasyJet had been in contact, but would not give any details.

Europe's second-largest low-cost airline after Ryanair secured a loan of 600 million pounds (663 million euros, \$785 million) as part of the UK's coronavirus emergency fund.

However, that aid is dwarfed by the German government's nine billion euro (\$10.7 billion) bailout of flagship carrier Lufthansa, which includes a 25 percent stake.

EasyJet said last month that it expects a fiscal-year pre-tax loss of 845 million pounds in 2020, its first-ever annual loss.

The company confirmed that 418 of around 1,500 jobs in Germany will be lost, while a further 320 will be secured only until next summer.

Lundgren said that the government understands that aviation is an

"indispensible" industry and that the current lockdown burdens "make an already very difficult situation even more difficult".

The current measures "are reaching a level that even a well-prepared company can no longer cope with on its own," he added.

The news comes ahead of an "air traffic summit" on Friday in which the German [government](#) will decide on whether to offer emergency aid to support near-empty airports nationwide.

Transport minister Andreas Scheuer is considering a package worth one billion euros, German media reported.

Airport association ADV said airports were "struggling for survival", with a quarter of more than 180,000 jobs in airports threatened with the axe.

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