AIR DOLOMITI CONSIDERS JOINING LUFTHANSA'S EUROWINGS CONCEPT

News / Airlines

Lufthansa subsidiary Air Dolomiti is evaluating being a part of the Eurowings concept. The Italian regional carrier provides point-to-point service and operates as a Munich hub feeder for Lufthansa.

"We want to change and we are studying being a part of the Lufthansa Wings concept; we will hopefully find a solution before Christmas," CEO Jörg Eberhart told ATW.

"This could be an ideal economical platform. If we would fly for Lufthansa or Eurowings, in terms of operations it would be not much different for us," Eberhart said, adding the onboard product would be different. Talks with pilot union Vereinigung Cockpit are under way.

Lufthansa has established Eurowings as a pan-European low-cost carrier (LCC) platform, which should rise quickly to 100 aircraft, as competition from LCCs such Ryanair, EasyJet and Vueling rise to a 50% market share in Europe. The Lufthansa Group has recently invited airlines to join Eurowings as franchise companies.

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Air Dolomiti has a fleet of 10 Embraer E190s. Eberhart believes the carrier could operate some routes -- for example, from Bologna or Venice -- with larger aircraft such as an Airbus A320.

"For example, if you operate an Airbus A320, you have up to 50% more capacity compared to the E190, but just less than 10% more operating costs for the flight itself," he said.

Eberhart sees Eurowings as an important part for Lufthansa's future. "Once you lose a market to a low-cost carrier, it is impossible for you to get it back. We take all LCCs seriously and we have to do our homework."

He estimates the share of LCCs in Italy is about 30%.

Eberhart said Air Dolomiti will also take advantage of this timely momentum to evaluate further projects and strategies. "With the current low fuel prices, we are winning some time," he said.

The airline business in Italy remains challenging. "On one side, we see the market is recovering. But we also see, carriers like Emirates flying into Bologna and Venice, which impacts our feeder traffic. Also Alitalia is changing - this will create more pressure on us," he said.

Air Dolomiti predicts it will carry 1.6 million passengers this year.

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