70 YEARS OF GERMAN AIRWAYS: FROM WDL TO EUROPEAN REGIONAL AVIATION ICON

News / Airlines

German Airways, Germany's second oldest airline, is celebrating: exactly 70 years ago, the then fledgling Federal Aviation Authority granted the company, under its former name Westdeutsche Luftwerbung GmbH (WDL) and led by its founder Theodor Wüllenkemper, the second operating licence in the Federal Republic of Germany. This marked the beginning of an eventful company history at Essen-Mülheim Airport. Today, German Airways is one of the most traditional names in German and European aviation. The company is now based in Cologne and has deep roots in the cathedral city and its Cologne/Bonn Airport.

Originally starting out as a provider of aerial advertising and banner flights, WDL developed rapidly and took on increasingly demanding tasks for companies and institutions. These included factory flights, special medical transports and freight services for global logistics companies. Over the decades, the fleet was repeatedly reorganised to meet growing and changing requirements – from the legendary Learjet to robust turboprop aircraft such as the Fokker F 27.

In 1974, the company was renamed WDL Flugdienst, later WDL Aviation, and continued to expand

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its range of services. In October 2017, a comprehensive modernisation programme was launched; three years later, the airline was known as German Airways and also joined IATA.

Today, German Airways is an innovative and flexible regional airline with a state-of-the-art Embraer E190 fleet. The company is active throughout Europe in charter and wet lease operations. It flies in the wet lease business for major European flag carriers and offers corporate customers factory transfers and shuttles, special transports, incentive trips, and transports top-level sports teams to competitions (national teams, Champions League or Bundesliga teams), transports other sports teams such as football, rugby or volleyball teams, as well as bands, orchestras and celebrities to their destinations. The company has done an excellent job of combining its traditional roots with the requirements of modern, forward-looking aviation and continuing on its growth path.

As it celebrates its 70th anniversary, German Airways looks back with pride on seven decades of German aviation history and thanks all its colleagues, customers, business partners and companions who have helped shape this extraordinary journey. German Airways will remain true to its commitment to making an important contribution to European aviation with independence, quality and reliability and to continuing its success story in the future. The next steps in innovation and development are already in sight for the airline.

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