NORWEGIAN'S KJOS SAYS INTERLINE DEAL WITH RYANAIR 'CLOSE'

News / Airlines

Norwegian (DY, Oslo Gardemoen) founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Bjørn **Kjos** has confirmed that his airline is in cooperation talks with fellow budget operator and rival**,Ryanair** (FR,Dublin Int'l).

Kjos told Bloomberg news in an interview that the negotiations pertain to the Irish LCC providing feeder traffic to Norwegian Long Haul (DU, Oslo Gardemoen) at its bases around Europe. A deal could be concluded “shortly,” he said.

Kjos's comments confirm Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary's remarks in August wherein he acknowledged his airline was in talks to seal interline agreements with number of longhaul operators. Among the carriers approached by Ryanair include Aer Lingus concerning feed into its Dublin Int'l hub, TAP Air Portugal and its Lisbon hub, and Norwegian and Virgin Atlantic concerning their Londdon Gatwick base operations. Ryanair has been increasing its presence at Europe's major longhaul hubs and this week French paper Les Echos revealed the airline has applied for Paris CDG and Paris Orly slots.

“We have already had discussions about this topic with IAG, TAP, Aer Lingus, Virgin Atlantic, Norwegian. I think we will be able to announce a few deals next summer,” he said.

However, despite O'Leary's optimism, Ryanair's chairman David Bonderman has expressed his own scepticism at the move claiming it would negatively impact Ryanair's low-cost business model.

"I myself am a sceptic on that because if you're going to continue focusing relentlessly on low cost and low prices, you can't be doing things that are inefficient," he told the Irish Independent in an interview. "Trying to co-ordinate flights, if that's what you do, with a long-haul carrier makes for

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inefficiency. Southwest Airlines (WN, Dallas Love Field) has tried it in the States, but nobody has really tried it in a big way. As I say, I'm a sceptic."

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