



RYANAIR EASTERN EUROPE EXPANSION POSES WIZZ AIR CHALLENGE

News / Airlines



Ryanair Holdings Plc, Europe's biggest discount airline, is pushing further into Eastern Europe than it previously planned, heightening competition with Wizz Air Holdings Plc, the area's leading low-cost operator.

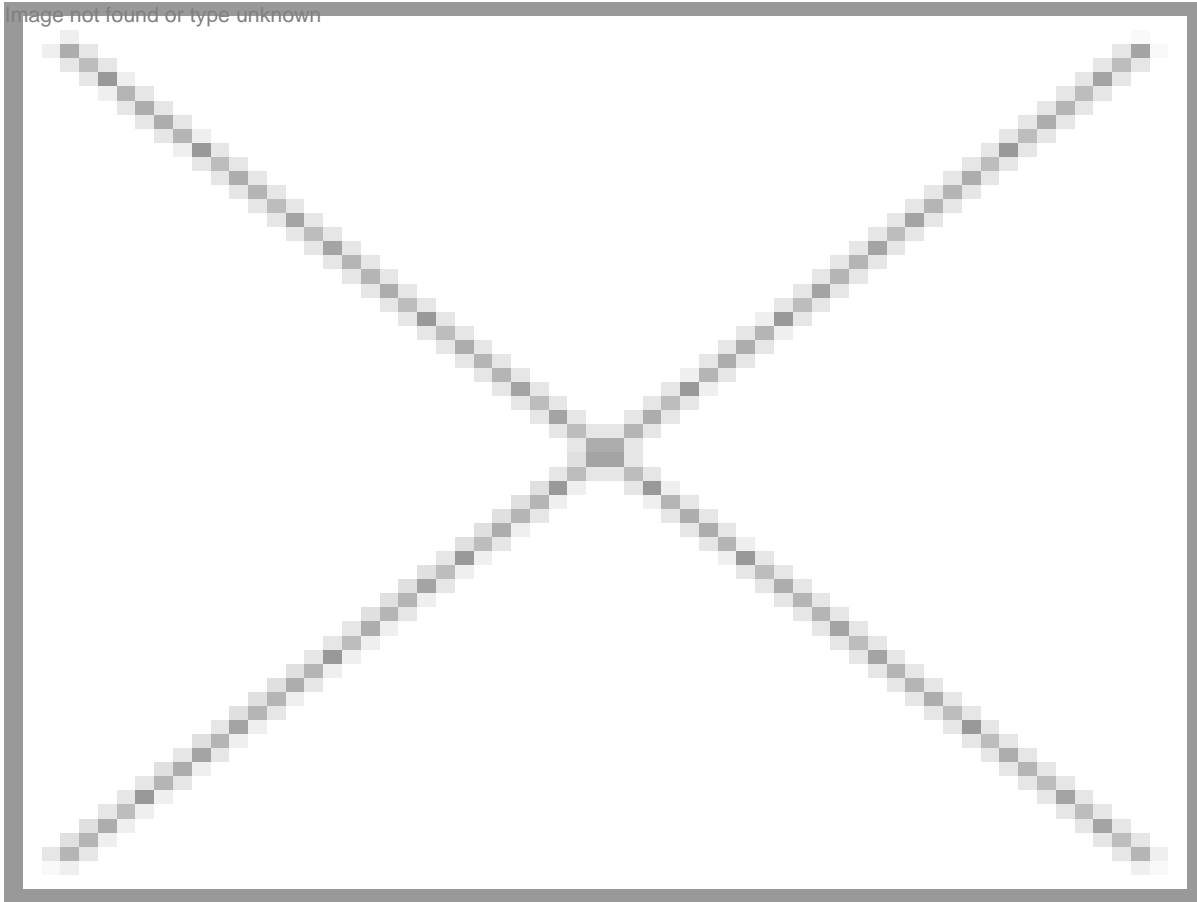
Since January, Ryanair has announced new bases in Sofia in Bulgaria, Vilnius in Lithuania, Bucharest and Timisoara in Romania and — last week — the Czech capital Prague, for a grand total of 84. Wizz, based in Budapest, Hungary, serves all five locations and the carriers will compete directly on some routes.

Ryanair has previously advocated more cautious expansion into Eastern Europe, opening only eight bases there, four of them in Poland. Spokesman Robin Kiely said the change of attitude reflects the fact it's already the biggest carrier by passenger numbers in major West European markets such as Spain.

The Irish company's initial commitment to the new bases will be modest, with 11 Boeing Co. 737s to be stationed there from next winter, though capacity will be increased in the summer of 2017,

Kiely said.

Ryanair carried 101.4 million people in 2015 versus 19.2 million at Wizz, which said on March 23 that its net income for the year ended March 31 was likely to be close to the 210 million-euro (\$237 million) top-end forecast.



Ryanair is still expanding in West European markets including Germany, where it has had a smaller presence and is targeting Berlin, Hamburg and Nuremberg.

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