ETIHAD TO APPEAL GERMAN COURT RULING

News / Airlines

Etihad Airways said it would appeal against a German court ruling to stop it selling tickets on some routes operated by airberlin.

The court said yesterday that Etihad would not be able to operate codeshares on some flights from January 16 to the end of its winter schedule in March next year because they were not supported by the agreement between the UAE and Germany on traffic rights.

A codeshare deal allows two airlines to market and sell seats on each other's flights.

"Etihad Airways is deeply disappointed by the German court's decision,"Etihad said. "The social and economic damage to Germany by this decision is significant. The withdrawal of approval for codeshare services on 29 routes materially reduces competition and consumer choice within and beyond Germany and causes inconvenience to passengers."

Etihad said it would "stand by" airberlin and continue to honour all booked itineraries.

The German transport ministry had approved the codeshare agreement between Etihad and airberlin on the routes. But it changed its stance last year saying the codeshares contravened the

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agreement on traffic rights.

Etihad owns a 29.2 per cent stake in airberlin.

James Hogan, the president of Etihad, said previously that the disputed codeshare routes had helped two million passengers to connect between networks of both airlines, as well as contributing €252 million (Dh1.02bn) to airberlin's earnings.

"We are satisfied with the access we have. This is a key pillar for the airberlin turnaround programme," Mr Hogan said in October. "When we invested in airberlin, we made it very clear with the appropriate authorities that we will be codesharing with airberlin."

A spokeswoman for the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority said it would meet Etihad to discuss the matter.

Airberlin called the ruling "regrettable".

In an email to the Bloomberg news agency, it said that all booked codeshare flights with Etihad would proceed as scheduled, with no disruption for passengers.

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