



RYANAIR'S CEO ISN'T AFRAID TO SCARE A FEW PEOPLE TO KEEP BRITAIN IN THE EU

News / Airlines, Personalities



Ryanair Holdings Plc Chief Executive Officer Michael O'Leary, emerging as one of the strongest business advocates of Britain staying in the European Union, said the anti-Brexit campaign should be ready to scare voters to secure victory in June 23's referendum.

Asked what he would do to bolster the "Remain" cause if the outcome of the poll is still in doubt 10 days before the ballot, the Irishman said the pro-EU lobby shouldn't flinch from stating its case in the starkest terms.

"I'd want to terrify the life out of everybody that there's a real danger the lunatics on the leave side are going to win, so get out and vote," O'Leary said at a Bloomberg Brexit forum in Dublin on Friday.

Ryanair, which is based in the Irish capital but counts the U.K. as its biggest market, is spending 25,000 euros (\$20,000) on an advertising drive calling on Britons to stay in the 28-nation bloc, O'Leary said.

In addition to newspaper and online ads, the campaign will see Europe's biggest discount airline add vast pro-EU stickers to some of its aircraft. The company will also e-mail an unspecified number of U.K. businesses and customers using its client database.

O'Leary said Ryanair expects to slow or halt further expansion in the U.K. in the event of a Brexit, and that Britons should expect airfares to increase as the U.K. becomes less attractive compared with faster-growing markets.

A Brexit accompanied by Britain leaving the European single market would also put at risk the so-called open skies regime that liberalized aviation within the EU and underpinned the emergence of the low-cost sector, the CEO said.

"One of the great things that EU has delivered is low-fare air traffic," he said. "We fundamentally believe it's in the U.K.'s best interests to stay."

Some of Ryanair's ads feature the headline "Vote Yes to Europe" above an image of one of its jets flying over Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament as a red London bus sweeps by.

Britain accounts for almost two out of every five Ryanair passengers, with Europe's largest low-cost carrier expecting to attract 41 million customers there this year out of 106 million in total.

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