

Dutch court says Ryanair pilots' strike can go ahead

August 9 2018, by By Charlotte Van Ouwerkerk And Jan Hennop



Ryanair pilots in the Netherlands have been given the green light to join planned strike action across Europe

A Dutch court told Ryanair pilots in the Netherlands Thursday they could join a wave of strike action planned across Europe, set to plunge

thousands of passengers into summer travel misery.

"The strike may go ahead," judge Theo Roell told the Haarlem District Court, where Ryanair had filed for an urgent court order to halt the industrial action.

Ryanair pilots in the Netherlands announced Wednesday they were joining a European-wide walkout on Friday to ratchet up pressure on the cut-price airline in a row over pay and conditions at the height of the summer season.

The strike in the Netherlands "was part of bigger industrial action elsewhere in Europe with a far greater impact and against which no legal action has been taken," judge Roell added.

Ryanair, which in the Netherlands flies to holiday destinations such as Malaga in southern Spain, the Canary Islands and Ibiza, said it would have to axe around 400 out of 2,400 European flights scheduled for Friday, affecting 55,000 passengers.

Germany will be the worst hit with 250 [flight](#) cancellations.

In the Netherlands around 22 flights from Eindhoven airport could potentially be affected, the ANP news agency reported.

But Ryanair, in a statement said "there will be no cancellations (of flights to and from the Netherlands) as a result of the unnecessary strike action by the Dutch pilot union."

And in a later statement, Ryanair said that despite the "regrettable and unjustified strike action" more than "2,000 flights (85 percent of our schedule) will operate as normal) across Europe on Friday.

Customers were notified as early as possible and a majority of those affected had already been moved to another Ryanair flight, the airline added.

'It's the passengers who get duped'

Earlier, Ryanair's lawyer Jochem Croon told the court the airline did not file the case "to refute the pilots' right to strike".



Europe's second biggest airline has been grappling with staff unrest since it recognised trade unions for the first time in December 2017

"It's a fundamental right and Ryanair recognises it," Croon said.

This case "is about protecting the interests of vacationers".

"It's the passengers who get duped in the event of a strike during the summer vacation," he said, accusing the Dutch airline pilots union VNV of not giving advance notice of its plans to join the strike action.

But the VNV's lawyers refuted Ryanair's claims, saying the Irish-based airline's lawsuit "is not about putting passengers first".

"There is no question of social disruption," Alwin Stege told the judge, stressing that only a small number of flights from the Netherlands could potentially be affected.

VNV spokesman Joost van Doesburg told AFP he was "very happy with the decision".

He said though that the VNV "in the near future needs to give earlier warning of the strike action but then Ryanair would then not be allowed to fly in scab pilots" from other countries.

Europe's second biggest airline has been grappling with staff unrest since it recognised trade unions for the first time in December 2017, in a bid to ward off widespread strikes over the Christmas period.

But unions say little progress has been made on their demands for better wages and fairer contracts despite months of talks.

Ryanair sought an urgent court order in the Netherlands to prevent pilots from joining the strike.

Public broadcaster NOS said Ryanair's lawyers chose to file the case in

the Netherlands "as it had a better chance of success".

The Haarlem District Court for instance in August 2016 banned KLM airline ground staff from going on [strike](#) during the busy summer holiday period.

The Netherlands also does not have a strong labour action culture and when strikes happen "judges sometimes do not hesitate to ban them," the NOS said.

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Citation: Dutch court says Ryanair pilots' strike can go ahead (2018, August 9) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-08-dutch-court-ryanair.html>

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