

# Ryanair's Laudamotion to double fleet next year

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There are more of these coming as the latest airline venture of Formula One race driving legend Niki Lauda and Ryanair expands its fleet

Ryanair's Laudamotion will double its Airbus fleet to 18 aircraft in the summer next year, the Austrian budget airline announced Wednesday.

Irish low-cost carrier Ryanair took control of Laudamotion from Formula One race driving legend Niki Lauda in March, paying around 50 million euros (\$58 million) for a majority 75-percent holding.

The expansion of the fleet with nine additional A320s comes after the completion of the purchase in order to support the Vienna-based carrier's "continued growth", Laudamotion said in a statement.

The airline will hire more staff and also increase pay for pilots with a basic starting salary of 90,000 euros per year for a captain, 12,000 euros higher than competitor Eurowings, it said.

Other improvements in conditions include a "stable winter roster" of five days on duty, three days off.

In recent months aviation giant Ryanair has been hit by pilot and other staff strikes over pay and conditions, plunging passengers into transport chaos at the peak of the busy summer season.

Earlier this week, Italian pilots approved an agreement over working conditions with Ryanair in the first such deal the carrier has fully concluded.

Lauda won back the airline, originally named Niki, from now-defunct Air Berlin this January, re-naming it Laudamotion before selling the majority stake to Ryanair.

The airline began operations this summer, principally offering routes to Mediterranean holiday destinations such as Greece and the Balearic Islands.

The Oesterreich daily reported earlier this month the triple F1 world champion—who is in a Vienna hospital after an August 2 lung

transplant—is considering selling his remaining stake in the business and reducing his workload.

But in the press release, Ryanair chief commercial officer, David O'Brien, said the team looked forward to welcoming him back "as soon as possible", wishing him a "very speedy recovery".

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