

# EasyJet could shift legal HQ overseas as airline pushes ahead with post-Brexit plans

By Ben Martin

BUDGET airline easyJet is pressing ahead with plans to set up a new company in Europe to avoid the fallout from Brexit, a move that could involve switching its legal headquarters abroad.

The FTSE 100 airline has started the process to acquire a so-called air operator certificate (AOC) in a European country as a contingency in case the UK loses its right to fly freely across the continent after Brexit. Gaining a certificate may result in easyJet legally registering its HQ in an EU country, although it insisted yesterday that the 1,000-plus staff at its Luton Airport head office would be unaffected.

The AOC would ensure the airline has unfettered access to the European Common Aviation Area (ECAA), allowing the short-haul carrier to fly to destinations across the continent. Depend-



How The Sunday Telegraph revealed easyJet's interest in a new air certificate

ing on the outcome of talks with European aviation regulators, the holding company will either be a subsidiary of easyJet or, more likely, become its legal headquarters.

There are fears Brexit could obstruct

UK airlines' access to the ECAA and it is understood a number of carriers are considering purchasing AOCs. *The Telegraph* revealed before the referendum that easyJet was looking into the certificates.

The airline was at pains to stress yesterday that even if its HQ switched abroad, it would only need a skeleton staff at the new legal entity. It would, however, mean that easyJet's annual general meetings and board meetings would be held in Europe, rather than the UK.

Brexit could also mean Irish carrier Ryanair would need an AOC in the UK.

FTSE 100 giant International Airlines Group, which owns British Airways, Spain's Iberia and Ireland's Aer Lingus, already has AOCs in all three countries. Despite being listed on the London Stock Exchange, IAG is legally a Spanish company.

