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EasyJet eyes Europe move

Fears that the French could start limiting flights to Europe by British airlines have prompted easyJet to consider moving its operations to within the European Union (Robert Lea writes).

After a week in which £1.8 billion was wiped off the value of Britain's largest short-haul airline — **Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou**, the founder and major shareholder, has lost £600 million — easyJet gave its strongest indication yet that it was prepared to quit the UK to protect its rights to fly around the EU.

It came amid worries that EU countries could take Brexit-related pre-emptive action and that the Department for Transport was not taking seriously enough the impact of the vote on UK airlines.

EasyJet said: "As part of easyJet's contingency planning before the referendum we had informal discussions with a number of European aviation regulators about the establishment of an AOC — air operator certificate — in a European country to enable easyJet to fly across Europe as we do today. EasyJet has now started a formal process to acquire an AOC."

It insisted that it would maintain its Luton headquarters, however.

The airline added: "We are lobbying the UK government and the EU to ensure the continuation of a fully liberal and deregulated aviation market within the UK and Europe. This would mean that easyJet and all European airlines can continue to operate as they do today."

EasyJet operates 800 routes to 30 countries around Europe, north Africa and the Middle East.

