Wizz Air suspends Russian and Ukrainian flights

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Wizz Air confirmed it had suspended all flights to and from Russia and Ukraine on Wednesday Mar. 2, as it looked to evacuate staff and planes following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Hungarian airline, the only European Union carrier to have bases in Ukraine, said it was supporting employees who remained in the country who wanted to leave. It also has an evacuation plan ready to bring out its assets "when it was safe to do so". Wizz has three aircraft in Kyiv and one in Lviv.

All flights, meanwhile, have been suspended to and from Russia and Ukraine following the closure of Ukrainian, Moldovan and Russian airspace.

In February, there were 2% fewer network flights than originally scheduled as a result, Wizz said, with a 7% reduction expected in March.

The fourth-quarter operating loss is set to be "slightly greater" than the third-quarter loss, "subject to preserving the integrity of our assets on the ground or other further developments in March", Wizz noted.

The update came as Wizz posted traffic figures for February. It had 1.921m booked passengers last month, a 401.7% improvement on February 2021, when a number of European countries, including the UK, were in lockdown. It was, however, down on January 2022, when it carried 2.40m passengers.

The load factor was 91.0%, while capacity improved 284.8% to 2.11m.

In January, Wizz's load factor was 79.6% while capacity was 3.01m.

chief executive Jozsef Varadi said: "In this very concerning situation, we have been focused on helping our colleagues and their families in Ukraine to move to places of safety. We will offer already evacuated colleagues continued support, and the choice to get employment elsewhere in the network, should they wish to.

"We continue to work through the operational challenges arising from the crisis in Ukraine, and we are redistributing capacity to routes and bases where we can drive demand in line with our proven ultra-low-cost carrier model."