

Lufthansa Can't Push Pilots to Retire at Age 60, EU Court Says

(Bloomberg) - Deutsche Lufthansa AG's rules that set the retirement age for pilots at 60 are unlawful, the European Union's highest court said.

"Prohibiting airline pilots from working after the age of 60 constitutes discrimination on grounds of age," the EU Court of Justice said in a statement on today's ruling in Luxembourg. "While the right to act as a pilot may be limited from that age, total prohibition goes beyond that which is necessary to ensure air traffic safety."

Lufthansa, Europe's second-biggest airline, is being challenged by three former pilots whose contracts were terminated when they reached 60. The pilots, Reinhard Prigge, Michael Fromm and Volker Lambach, argued the company's rules infringed German and international laws that say pilots can continue to fly until the age of 65, if accompanied by a pilot younger than 60.

A German court handling the dispute sought the European tribunal's guidance in 2009 on whether rules that limit the age for pilots at 60 for air-safety reasons infringe EU laws that prohibit age discrimination.