

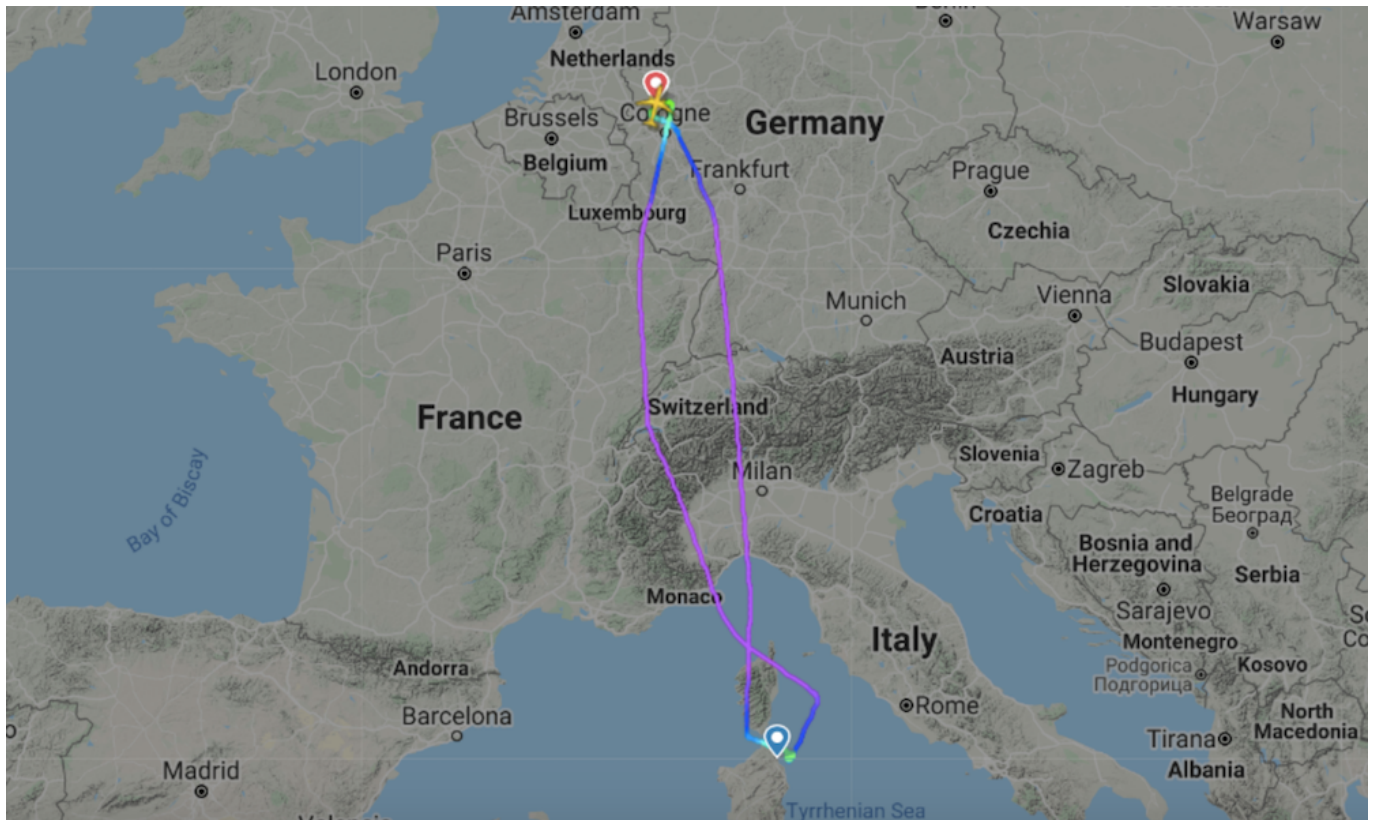
Eurowings flight to nowhere highlights Notam problems

David Mumford
26 May, 2020



Confused about whether you're allowed to fly to Italy at the moment? You're not the only one!

A Eurowings (Lufthansa's European low-cost subsidiary) flight from EDDL/Dusseldorf to LIEO/Olbia ended up diverting back to Germany this week, after discovering the airport was actually **closed to commercial traffic**.



Yes, there was a Notam, and yes, it looks like they missed it – though that’s maybe not surprising given the Notams being pumped out on the national LIBB/LIMM/LIRR codes at the moment saying how pretty much all airports across the country have now reopened – including LIEO!

So let’s play a game of ‘spot the difference’. Here’s the National one, published on May 19:

A3028/20 (Issued for LIBB LIMM LIRR) COVID-19:

ALL FLIGHTS ARRIVING/DEPARTING TO/FM ITALY MUST COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF 17 MAY 2020 ON FOLLOWING AIRPORTS: LIPY, LIBD, LIME, LIPE, LIEE, LICC, LIRQ, LIMJ, LICA, LICD, LIMC, LIRN, LIEO, LICJ, LICG, LIBP, LIRP, LIRA, LIRF, LIMF AND LIPZ, COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS, COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS ON DEMAND (AEROTAXI) AND GENERAL AVIATION FLIGHTS ARE ALLOWED.

GENERAL AVIATION ACTIVITY AND COMMERCIAL AVIATION ACTIVITY ON DEMAND (AEROTAXI) WITH AIRCRAFT HAVING MAXIMUM APPROVED CABIN CONFIGURATION EQUAL OR LESS THAN 19 SEATS, CARGO FLIGHTS AND POSTAL SERVICE ARE ALLOWED ON ALL REMAINING AIRPORTS.

GENERAL AVIATION ACTIVITY, COMMERCIAL AVIATION ACTIVITY ON DEMAND (AEROTAXI) WITH AIRCRAFT HAVING MAXIMUM APPROVED CABIN CONFIGURATION EQUAL OR LESS THAN 19 SEATS ARE ALLOWED ON AIRFIELDS/HELISURFACES/HYDROSURFACES MANAGED/AUTHORIZED/OCCASIONALS, WITHIN THE LIMITS OF APPLICABLE AUTHORIZATIONS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF 17 MAY 2020

RMK: GENERAL AVIATION ACTIVITY AND A COMMERCIAL AVIATION FLIGHT ON DEMAND ON LIRF IS NOT PERMITTED.

19 MAY 11:16 2020 UNTIL 02 JUN 22:00 2020 ESTIMATED.

CREATED: 19 MAY 11:27 2020

And here’s the one for LIEO/Olbia, published two days later on May 21:

B2520/20 – COVID-19.

AERODROME CLOSED TO COMMERCIAL AVIATION TRAFFIC IN COMPLIANCE WITH REGIONE SARDEGNA DECREE 23 OF 17TH MAY 2020.

RMK: GENERAL AVIATION ACTIVITY AND COMMERCIAL AVIATION ACTIVITY ON DEMAND (AEROTAXI) WITH AIRCRAFT HAVING MAXIMUM CABIN CONFIGURATION EQUAL OR LESS THAN 19 SEATS ARE APPROVED IN

COMPLIANCE WITH MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION DECREE 207/2020 AND REGIONE SARDEGNA DECREE 23 OF 17TH MAY 2020.

REF AIP AD 2 LIEO 1-1. 21 MAY 15:14 2020 UNTIL 02 JUN 22:00 2020 ESTIMATED.

CREATED: 21 MAY 15:14 2020

The national one says the airport is **open**, the local one says the airport is **closed** – a classic case of **Notamisery**.

A number of news reports on this incident have been quick to criticise the operator — and also the crew — for this oversight. We're not sure we really feel like jumping on that particular bandwagon. We could talk at length about **The Notam Problem** (indeed, we have done so, here, here, here, and here, and also here).

The Notam problem is clear: we have an antiquated, cumbersome, ineffective, frustrating, dangerous system. Pilots are missing the essential few pieces of information, unable to hear the call of criticality in a cacophony of irrelevant noise. *And it obviously doesn't help when one Italian sends you a Notam saying an airport is open, and another Italian sends you one saying it's closed.*

These are also “unusual times” – we keep hearing those words in the news, but it's true. Two months in to the Covid-19 pandemic, it feels like “ops : normal” is still a long way off for most of us – whatever job we do in aviation, wherever we fly. People are tired. The changes are constant. A spokesperson for Eurowings summed this up pretty well in a statement released after this incident at Olbia: *“Against the background of the current corona crisis, the situation at numerous airports in Europe is very dynamic, which is manifested in the large amount of information provided on operating hours or airport closures that are often changed at short notice as well as daily changes in entry regulations in the various countries.”*

As this incident shows, wherever you're headed, whatever you read in a Notam, it's always worth double-checking exactly what's allowed at the airport you're flying to. Don't be afraid to give them a call. If you need to find some local airport contacts, the Flock website is one of the best free contact databases we've seen so far (and no, they don't pay us to say that!)

In related news – Italy has said it will start allowing **unrestricted travel to and from European countries**, with no quarantine requirement, from June 3. No official word yet on when restrictions will be lifted on flights to and from countries outside of Europe – but the external borders of the EU remain closed to non-essential travel until June 15 at the earliest. More on that here.