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## SESSION 2003

## EXPRESSION ET COMMUNICATION

## ANGLAIS

Durée : 2 heures – Coefficient : 0,5

N.B – Il est rappelé au candidat que pour l'épreuve d'anglais l'usage des machines (agendas, traductrices...) et du dictionnaire est *interdit*.

SUJET

## Flying high

Germany's national airline is weathering difficult times well

Not all is gloom in Germany, nor at every big airline. This week, despite a feeble economy and fragile demand for air travel, Lufthansa, the national flag-carrier, reported a pre-tax profit of 650m Euros (\$601m) for the first nine months of 2002, more than two-and-a-half times its 2001 result.

The key has been cost-cutting. Revenues actually fell over the period by 2.9 % in passenger transport, Lufthansa's biggest division, an 4.5 % in cargo (...) [but] operating costs are 8 % lower than a year ago. Jürgen Weber, chief executive, says he feels "honoured" to be nicknamed *der Rechner* (the calculator).

The trick, says Wolfgang Mayrhuber, who succeeds Mr Weber next year, is "in simple words, you should not produce more than you sell. "While Lufthansa has adjusted its fleet capacity to meet demand, he argues that America's loss-making big airline have concentrated on maintaining market share, "which you can only do if you have yours costs under control."

Lufthansa also managed to squeeze labour costs. In America last year, for example, it cut 4,000 jobs at its catering division. Elsewhere, wages have been reduced by trimming working time instead of sacking people (helpfully, managers also took a pay cut). Mr Mayrhuber insists this choice had nothing to do with German labour laws. Jobs can be shed if need be, he says : 8,500 went in 1992, when Lufthansa was in deep difficulty. This time, he says, "We didn't want to fire, and then hire again and retrain."

Indeed, Lufthansa plans to hire 1,800 cabin crew and 340 trainee pilots in the next year—if it can control wages. Last year, after hobbling the airline with strikes, pilots won a handsome pay deal. Now, emboldened by Lufthansa's renewed health, unions want a pay rise of 9 % for cabin and ground staff. The company is braced for a fight. "Don't saw off the branch you are sitting on," barked Mr Weber this week.

Surprisingly, Lufthansa is more relaxed about the imminent invasion of German airspace by cut-price airlines than it is about other impending difficulties, such as the sagging economy and expected tax rises. Soon, Germany should have ten or so such airlines, operating about 60 aircraft. There will not be room for all. On current plans, says Cell Consulting, an airline-economics firm, the supply of cheap seats would outstrip demand by 20-30 % by 2007.

Among current airlines, charter operators are the most vulnerable. But what about comfy old Lufthansa ?

In the cut-price market it already owns 24.9 % of Eurowings, a small airline which has just converted its charter arm into a no-frills operation, germanwings. But this was Eurowings' decision, says Mr Mayrhuber : it is not a market Lufthansa seeks to be in. He would prefer to invest in a new Boeing 747 to serve a lucrative long-haul route. Lufthansa's recent fare cuts, says the company, are designed simply to fill seats, not to fend off cut-price rivals.

Lufthansa argues that the two makets are separate and that it is better of sticking to the one it knows. The cut-price airlines fly from point to point, turning their aircraft around quickly, with no connections, only one class and no rebooking. Lufthansa and its partners run complex interconnecting networks, aiming at "seamless global travel." In other words, there is little direct competition. "So far we have not one route where we compete, for instance, with Raynair," Mr Mayrhuber insists.

The Irish no-frills airline, which also revealed a big rise in profits this week, might disagree. It touts its Hahn base, 100 km from Frankfurt, as a substitute for Lufthansa's main hub. Is there not a risk that cheap, point-to-point flights will nibble at the edges of Lufthansa's network ? (...)

*The Economist, 9 November 2002*

## Travail à faire par le candidat

### I – COMPREHENSION DU TEXTE (sur 40 points)

*Answer briefly and completely. Read the questions before answering.*

1. Compare Lufthansa's situation to the global situation of air travel.
2. Did Lufthansa achieve good results ? How ?
3. What does Mr Mayrhuber mean when he says : "You should not produce more than you sell" ?
4. What's the difference between Lufthansa and American airline companies ?
5. How did Lufthansa reduce labour costs ?
6. Why has Lufthansa not laid off workers this year ?
7. Why do cabin and ground staff want a 9 % pay rise ?
8. Is Lufthansa interested in cut-price airlines ? Why ?
9. What is aimed at through the recent price cuts in Lufthansa's fares ?
10. Explain the difference between Lufthansa and cut-price airlines.

### II – VERSION (sur 30 points)

*Translate the following passages :*

1. "Not all this gloom in Germany, nor at every big airline." (line 1)
2. *From* "Elsewhere, wages have been reduced..." (line 15)  
*to* "... a pay cut)" (line 16)
3. *From* "Surprisingly, Lufthansa is more relaxed..." (line 25)  
*to* "...expected tax rises" (line 27)
4. "He would prefer to invest in a new Boeing 747 to serve a lucrative long-haul route" (lines 34-35)

### III – EXPRESSION (sur 30 points)

How can you stay competitive when going through a crisis ? Basing your answer on the information you can draw from this article about air travel, you may also refer to other products or other products or other products or other possible solutions.

## CORRIGE

### I – COMPREHENSION DU TEXTE

1. The global situation of air travel today is one of highly competitive, no-frills companies such as Ryanair and Easyjet competing with the big airline companies like Lufthansa, Air France or British Airways. In 2002 Lufthansa reported pre-tax profits and says that the cut-price airlines do not present any real risk since the services offered are very different to those offered by the smaller airlines.
2. Lufthansa achieved good results by cutting operating costs.
3. He means that production and operating costs should always be kept under control in relation to sales.
4. The main difference between Lufthansa and American airline companies is that Lufthansa adjusted its fleet capacity to meet demand whereas the American airlines concentrated on maintaining market share.
5. It reduced labour costs by cutting 4, 000 jobs at its catering division in the US. Managers took pay cuts and employees' wages were reduced by shortening working time.
6. Lufthansa has not laid off workers since it doesn't want to fire them then have to re-hire and re-train later.
7. Cabin and ground staff want a rise because the annual results are good, the company is doing well and when the pilots went on strike they obtained a good pay deal.
8. Lufthansa is not really interested in cut-price airlines since it considers them to provide different services to different customers. It considers the two markets to be totally different.
9. The recent price cuts in Lufthansa's fares were designed to fill empty seats not compete with cut-price rivals.
10. Lufthansa seeks to provide "seamless global travel" through complex interconnecting networks, with a business class and the possibility of changing bookings whereas the smaller companies provide point to point travel with no connections, only one class and no rebooking.

### II – VERSION

1. Tout n'est pas morose en Allemagne, ni dans chaque grande compagnie aérienne.
2. Ailleurs, les salaires ont été réduits par le biais d'une diminution du temps de travail plutôt que par des licenciements (pour y contribuer, les cadres ont accepté une réduction de salaire).
3. Etonnement, Lufthansa semble plus serein au sujet de l'invasion imminente de l'espace aérien allemand par les compagnies aériennes à prix réduits que par d'autres difficultés envisageables tel qu'un fléchissement de l'économie ou une hausse attendue des impôts.
4. Il préférerait investir dans un nouveau Boeing 747 au service de vols longs courriers lucratifs.

### III – EXPRESSION

Airline companies can resort to several solutions to remain competitive during the current air transport crisis. In the first place, like Lufthansa did, the company can reduce its costs particularly personnel-related costs, but it can also adapt its fleet to current demand. (A flight is only profitable if at least 70% of the seats are occupied).

Companies can also join in the price war, by offering the lowest prices possible in order to fill their planes. This is the trend of current demand and can be put into practice using yield management techniques.

A less aggressive and more defensive method for the company to adapt is to close down the less profitable lines or reduce the frequency of flights on these lines.

Finally, they can always buy existing, competitive companies or companies that are positioned on another sector of activity such as charters or cut-price companies. Hence, Lufthansa has a minority share in Eurowings.

This is perhaps the best solution for improving results during periods of recession since all the European cut-price companies are showing a very healthy increase in turnover and profitability whereas nearly all the traditional airlines are in the red.