

EC SAYS FAREWELL TO AIRPLANE MODE



The European Commission has surprised airlines, telecommunications operators and passengers around the world by stating that, from now on, airplanes will be able to provide 5G technology during the course of a flight. The European Commission thus stated that EU passengers would be able to use their cell phones in the middle of a flight "to the maximum of their capabilities and features, just like a 5G mobile network provided by an antenna on the ground". However, the implementation of this measure at present is not entirely secure.

'Airplane mode' is the default setting for the vast majority of mobile devices that consists of shutting down all types of communications and contact with the network. **This functionality was created because the use of mobile networks could interfere with the correct functioning of the aircraft and lead to an accident** (something very unlikely and which, in fact, has never happened).

Technological Progress

The goodbye to 'airplane mode' can be realized because, thanks to the advance of technology, it is now possible to designate certain frequencies for the use of 5G, avoiding overlapping with the aircraft's own communications or indicators. The mobile service will be provided from a "pico-cell" (a kind of router) placed in the aircraft cabin, allowing users and the network to be connected via satellites.

This important decision was made by a euphoric Thierry Breton, the Internal Market Commissioner, who informed about the decision by stating that "the sky is no longer the limit when it comes to the possibilities offered by super-fast and high-capacity connectivity". The inclusion of 5G on aircraft, he added, "will enable innovative services for people and growth opportunities for European businesses."

It's Not Goodbye, It's See You Later

Thanks to this new technology, we could now call our relatives, watch a streaming series or work online during a flight. However, the reality is more complicated. For starters, a fully stable and configured 5G network is needed worldwide, a scenario for which we will have to wait a few more years.

Moreover, connectivity does not promise to be particularly good. Since 2008, many airlines have been offering messaging, phone calls and in-flight data services, but the cost is so high that the vast majority of passengers do not even consider using them. On the other hand, connectivity is not entirely secure, and we can encounter failures and stoppages on a very regular basis.

Saying goodbye to 'airplane mode' can be done because, thanks to advances in technology, it is now possible to designate certain frequencies for the use of 5G.

It must be added that the connection through picocells is not exactly at a bargain price, so many airlines will think twice before installing their aircraft which does not ensure a return with benefits. And therein lies the crux of the matter: who is in charge of charging for this service? The operator, the airline... **They are a whole group of players who do not have a specific role with legislation that has yet to be defined.**

For this reason, new types of connections are being explored, with satellites at lower altitudes to promote a more stable and profitable connection. However, we will still have to wait several years before 'airplane mode' says goodbye to our travels for good.

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