AIRBUS

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AIX2026 Airbus Connectivity Update & News

# Future-proofing Airbus' Connected Aircraft for and beyond connectivity

In a wide and complex digital ecosystem, Airbus Connected Aircraft ambition is accelerating industry's digital and in-flight connectivity transformation, turning aircraft in-flight connectivity into smart aircraft capabilities that will unlock further operations performance. Passengers want a connection 'just like at home', while airlines need instant operational visibility and performance optimisation. Airbus is now establishing itself as the leader of this transformation, as its HBCplus service provider catalogue is becoming an industry benchmark. By unifying hardware, software, satellite networks and constellations (*LEO/MEO/GEO), airlines are no longer just selling aircraft seats, but rather unlocking a seamless world-wide connected experience for their passengers.

Today, Airbus delivers a fully integrated aviation-grade connectivity platform: 'HBCplus flex'. This is a multi-MSP (Managed Service Provider) and multi-orbit system that decouples the hardware from the software and provides airlines the freedom to choose and change their favourite set up, leveraging the best of connectivity in any place in the world.

### Expanded LEO coverage and connectivity partnerships for improved passenger experience

Airbus is continuing to extend its partnerships on all Orbits and is shaping a unique offer with the access to four Low Earth Orbit (LEO) constellations: Amazon LEO, Spacesail, OneWeb and Telesat. LEO ensures low latency and global coverage, including the most remote routes and polar regions.

To deliver this global LEO capability, Airbus is actively expanding its ecosystem of satellite and service partners. By collaborating with major technology innovators like Amazon LEO and Telesat, alongside experts such as Spacesail in China and Telesat, Airbus is working towards providing airlines with a highly adaptable worldwide LEO coverage.

**Today: 'HBCplus flex' – Proof through success of the Ka-band multi-orbits solution**

While Airbus firms-up these new LEO offerings – turning MoU's into full contracts – its proven and mature Ka-band LEO-MEO-GEO 'HBCplus flex' solution (using the ThinKom VICTS antenna and SPI's terminal) continues to attract new business with 16 customers.

**Next: Future proof multi-orbits & multi-MSP solution**
In a very dynamic industry and market, Airbus is actively working with Panasonic (Ka & Ku band), Amazon LEO (Ka band), SES (Ka & Ku band), SpaceSail (Ka band) and other MSPs to be able to offer the next evolution of HBCplus that will be compatible with most MSPs, whatever the bandwidths (Ka / Ku etc.) and or the orbit (LEO + MEO + GEO). Being modular in design, airlines will be able to switch between MSPs, satellite constellations or orbits without the 'tear-and-replace' costs of traditional hardware and structural impact on the aircraft.

**New dual-antenna modular design to dynamically switch between orbits**
This next incarnation – 'HBCplus modular' – will be offerable in 2026 and fly in 2028. It will be able to accommodate up to two antennas including a phased-array "Electronically Steered Antenna" (ESA). It will be capable of switching between providers and orbits, depending on the airline's preferences for optimised speed or lower service costs, but also depending on the country they are flying over. Airbus has also reworked the equipment design, managing to reduce HBCplus weight, its drag, and the upper surface.

The solution will feature a swappable plate on the aircraft, onto which different antennas from different MSPs' constellations can be combined in the same housing. This means that during flight the system can connect with different satellite operators and their respective satellite constellations according to the aircraft location.

For example, if you want to have one antenna for a constellation covering China and another one for a constellation over the US, you will be able to do that. Or if you want to have one GEO antenna sitting next to one LEO, you can do that too.

Overall, the key benefits we will offer with this next generation HBCplus are threefold: (a) Full multi-orbit solution with LEO, (b) easy access to a large choice of MSPs reducing vendor lock-in, and (c) keeping the Airbus guarantee and support.

**New-generation digital backbone coming soon . . .**
Connected Aircraft doesn't stop at the aircraft connectivity. Airbus is also developing an open platform that will be onboard (fully embedded in the overall aircraft architecture) and on ground to enable easy access to data. We are working to be able to offer that by the end of the year.

It will be designed as an end-to-end integrated operating system combining onboard and on ground systems, AI capabilities, IoT integration (sensors and cameras), while aggregating and facilitating data access to be leveraged for digital services.

At the end of 2026 Airbus will offer a new generation of digital backbone for our aircraft, which brings new capabilities: Not only will airlines be able to use Skywise applications or third-party applications, they will also be able to develop or have developed their own, test them easily and make them available fleet wide for their operations.

In short, the 'Connected Aircraft' is not about technology. This is about operational efficiency and passenger experience. This is why we are helping to translate the data into something meaningful. A practical example of service is the 'Smart Catering' application that we are showcasing today at the AIX 2026. An AI-powered scanning for high-accuracy catering consumption tracking, airlines can now access real-time inventory of food and beverage associated with data analysis to optimise stock ratios, allowing to slash costs and reduce food waste while improving the passenger experience.

***At a glance: the satellite orbits powering your flight, and respective MSP providers:**

**GEO - Geostationary Earth Orbit:** 36,000 km altitude; equator line, no polar coverage. Capability to focus the beams where there is capacity demand. Ability to deliver broadcasts (TV). Requiring a high performing antenna.
GEO MSPs (Ka-Band): SES; Hughes;(Ku-band): SES; Panasonic Avionics Corp.

**MEO - Medium Earth Orbit:** 8,000 km altitude; intermediate solution between GEO and LEO; fewer satellites needed than LEO. High throughput; low latency, network availability and flexibility.
MEO MSP (Ka-band): SES.

**LEO - Low Earth Orbit:** 500 to 2,000 km altitude; several hundreds of permanently moving satellites, with frequent hand-over. Global coverage including polar routes. Capacity distributed on all satellites. Very low latency suited for gaming, video conferencing, VoIP etc. Seamless handover required.
LEO MSPs - Ka-band: Amazon LEO (MoU); Hughes via Telesat 'Lightspeed'; Spacesail; Ku-band: Panasonic Avionics Corp. and SES – both using the OneWeb constellation.

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