Press Release

Telefónica launches a pioneering commercial service using remotely piloted drones

- The company is the only operator in Spain capable of offering a comprehensive end-to-end service using connected drones and remote piloting, thereby reducing response times and costs, and eliminating the need for pilots on the ground.

- This solution is based on Telefónica's capabilities to integrate remote piloting, 5G connectivity, the Drone-in-a-Box installation, video analytics and AI, permit management and Open Gateway APIs into autonomous and secure missions.

- In Cuacos de Yuste (Cáceres), an advanced system for the prevention, monitoring, detection and early response to forest fires has already been deployed, using connected drones remotely piloted from Telefónica's drone control centre.

Madrid, 10 April 2026.- Telefónica has reached a milestone in connected drone operations with the launch of a commercial service for businesses and public authorities, delivered from the company's new drone control centre. This facility is located at the company's National Supervision and Operations Centre (CNSO) in Aravaca and is staffed by personnel specialised in remote drone piloting.

In this way, Telefónica presents an innovative solution that transforms the current model of drone operations, where pilots are physically deployed to each mission, the need to apply for ad-hoc permits and carry out preliminary assessments of the environment—which delay the launch of the mission—paving the way for a pioneering end-to-end service in Spain, based on the company's technological and operational capabilities as a telecommunications operator.

The key elements underpinning this solution and making it unique in Spain are: the drone control centre, located at the CNSO in Aravaca, where professional pilots from Telefónica operate the drones safely from a distance; the Drone-in-a-Box technology (drone hive), automated take-off, landing and recharging stations that ensure the drones are ready at the mission site for immediate deployment, without the need to send a person to the location; Telefónica's 5G connectivity, which enables long-distance flights, continuous drone control and real-time video transmission thanks to the high speed and low latency of this network, which already reaches nearly 95% of the population; and a deployment of Edge Computing nodes unique in Spain, ensuring secure transmission and real-time analysis of images captured by the connected drones.

Furthermore, the robustness of Telefónica's 5G network allows for the incorporation of capabilities such as Network Slicing, to prioritise communications; the Computer Vision solution, which facilitates advanced real-time analysis of images and data using Artificial Intelligence; and the planning and connectivity API environment (Open Gateway), for safe and optimised flights.

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These innovative capabilities and technological solutions form part of a service offered by Telefónica Empresas, comprising an integrated management package that includes the processing of flight permits on a project-by-project basis, 5G connectivity provided over Telefónica's leading network, video analytics capabilities enhanced with Artificial Intelligence (AI), remote control of drones from the CNSO by specialist pilots, and the supply, installation and maintenance of drones according to each customer's preferences.

Telefónica offers this innovative service (and the management of the required permits) in two formats: 'Flight as a Service', aimed at customers who already own a drone and need the operator to handle flight operations from the drone control centre, and 'Drone as a Service', a solution which also provides the customer with the equipment, its sensors and data processing.

With this solution, Telefónica is leading the digitalisation of airspace in Spain in line with U-Space regulations, the European Union's (EU) regulatory framework designed to enable safe access to airspace for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). This new regulatory framework, together with the optimisation of 5G connectivity, the development of AI and the promotion of Edge Computing, enables BVLOS (Beyond Visual Line of Sight) operations, which consist of connected drone flights carried out beyond the pilot's direct line of sight.

Borja Ochoa, President of Telefónica Spain, states: "Telefónica is the first operator capable of offering a comprehensive remote drone service within Spain, an end-to-end service integrating hardware, connectivity, analytics, permits, platform and operations. We provide the best 5G connectivity and the latest technologies, and we take on the necessary operational and technical complexity, so that companies and public administrations in this country can benefit from the competitive advantage of new services tailored to their needs and based on autonomous, secure, rigorous and efficient drone management."

Sergio Sánchez, Director of Operations, Network and IT at Telefónica España, adds: "We have demonstrated our ability to operate in real time on a robust telecommunications infrastructure with nationwide coverage and extensive reach across the whole country, both in urban areas with high demand for connectivity and in rural areas not served by other operators. Thanks to our network and our distinctive technological and operational capabilities, we are already developing projects that demonstrate the application and added value of this ecosystem and these unique services."

From industry to the environment

Sectors such as industry, energy, logistics and public administration (emergency services and the environment) are among those that can benefit from the advantages of remotely piloted drone flights used for surveillance, infrastructure inspection and fire prevention.

Among Telefónica's first projects, one worth highlighting is the one deployed in Cuacos de Yuste (Cáceres) in collaboration with the Regional Government of Extremadura, which consists of an advanced system for the prevention, monitoring, detection and early response to forest fires. Upon detection of a heat source, wildfire response teams contact the pilots at Telefónica's drone control centre to remotely launch the drone from the drone hub in Cuacos de Yuste. Within minutes, the drone takes off and flies to the point where a heat source has been detected, transmitting the first images to the firefighters via 5G. With this rapid response, the firefighters determine whether to deploy personnel to the area and decide whether the drone should return to the hub or remain to monitor the site.

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CNSO: Telefónica's network operations hub and home of the new drone control centre

Telefónica's CNSO in Aravaca is the facility from which the company's network across Spain is comprehensively and continuously managed and monitored. Opened in November 1997, its main function is to act as the technical nerve centre ensuring the continuity of telecommunications services through 24/7 supervision that monitors the status of fixed, mobile, broadband and television (Movistar Plus+) networks in real time. Furthermore, the CNSO acts as a coordination centre in the event of major emergencies or natural disasters.

From now on, this centre will also house the new drone control centre, which will offer a service based on Telefónica's extensive experience in monitoring and operating infrastructure and services, and reaffirms the company's commitment to making innovation a reality for its customers.

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