Modern security checks

FAST AND BROAD DEPLOY-MENT OF TECHNOLOGY

It is not uncommon for security checks at German airports to result in bottlenecks. New technology and management by the operators can speed up the process. Frankfurt is at the vanguard here: Fraport has been responsible for security checks at Lufthansa's largest hub since the beginning of the year. The model is to set a precedent throughout Germany. The Federal Ministry of the Interior is prioritising and accelerating this strategy of innovation.

Faster checks, greater convenience
Passenger checks per hour and security lane through better technology

Current security lane
100%

New security lane
200%

Image: Fraport

Increasing passenger numbers, not enough staff and inefficient processes often lead to long queues at security checkpoints. The fastest solution is the use of computed tomography (CT) scanners. They provide greater security, are convenient and save time. This means that travellers don't have to unpack their laptops or liquids for inspection. Security personnel can screen more than twice as many travellers in the same amount of time. In Munich, the state-of-the-art CT technology has been in trial use since 2019, and the security checkpoint in Munich's Terminal 2 will be completely retrofitted by the autumn of 2024. In Frankfurt, seven of these devices are now in regular operation, and another 20 will be added this year. There are now no legal and technical obstacles to their widespread use in Germany. The procurement processes must now be driven forward quickly.

Advancing with automation
Modern technology can compensate for a shortage of personnel in the medium term. This is because the automatic detection of dangerous items means fewer employees can check more and more people and their luggage. The authorities and the industry need to work together to drive forward the development of this technology and accelerate its certification. Above all, the EU must rapidly create a legal basis for the use of greater automation.

Airports should manage security checks
Equally important: the modern technology available today must be used quickly by the airports. This is an area where the new distribution of tasks between the airport and the federal police – as is now the case in Frankfurt – offers huge opportunities. Until now, the federal police have been responsible for purchasing security technology at most airports. Making this the direct responsibility of the airport operator, under the supervision of the federal police, is more effective at many airports since the airport is best aware of the conditions and the number of passengers in the security lanes. It can adapt the procurement and deployment of safety technology with each specific situation and design processes to suit them. Moreover, the airports select the technology from a broad range; the federal police have so far limited themselves to a few standard configurations. The plan is for the "Frankfurt" model to become a role model for other German airports.

The new distribution of tasks at Frankfurt Airport shows what is possible when the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the airports and the airlines are all pulling in the same direction. Germany must show that it is capable of combining cutting-edge technology with a high level of security.