



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Aviation security: Commission adopts new rules on the use of security scanners at European airports

Brussels, 14 November 2011 -The European Commission has adopted today a proposal for an European Union legal framework on security scanners. This legislation allows airports and Member States that wish to use security scanners for the screening of passengers to do so under strict operational and technical conditions.

Member States have been trialling or testing security scanners¹, since a terrorist attempted on 25 December 2009 to blow up a plane flying from Amsterdam to Detroit with plastic explosives he had hidden in his underwear. Until now the use of security scanners has been done under a patchwork of different national operational procedures and standards and in a limited way. As a common EU-wide framework, the new legislation legally allows Member States and airports to replace current security systems with security scanners. It also ensures the uniform application of security rules at all airports and provides strict and mandatory safeguards to ensure compliance with fundamental rights and the protection of health.

Member States and airports do not have an obligation to deploy security scanners, but if they decide to use them, they will have to comply with the operational conditions and performance standards set at European level.

Vice-President Siim Kallas, Commissioner responsible for transport, said: "Security scanners are not a panacea but they do offer a real possibility to reinforce passenger security. Security scanners are a valuable alternative to existing screening methods and are very efficient in detecting both metallic and non-metallic objects. It is still for each Member State or airport to decide whether or not to deploy security scanners, but these new rules ensure that where this new technology is used it will be covered by EU wide standards on detection capability as well as strict safeguards to protect health and fundamental rights. Experience to date shows that passengers and staff generally see security scanners as a convenient method of screening."

Security scanners are an effective method of screening passengers as they are capable of detecting both metallic and non-metallic items carried on a person. The scanner technology is developing rapidly and has the potential to significantly reduce the need for manual searches ("pat-downs") applied to passengers, crews and airport staff.

¹ For example in the UK, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, France and Italy

Under the new EU legislation the use of security scanners is only allowed in accordance with minimum conditions such as for example that: security scanners shall not store, retain, copy, print or retrieve images; any unauthorised access and use of the image is prohibited and shall be prevented; the human reviewer analysing the image shall be in a separate location and the image shall not be linked to the screened person and others. Passengers must be informed about conditions under which the security scanner control takes place. In addition, passengers are given the right to opt out from a control with scanners and be subject to an alternative method of screening.

By laying down specific operational conditions and by providing passengers with the possibility of opting out, the legislation safeguards fundamental rights and the principles recognised in particular by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

In order not to risk jeopardising citizens' health and safety, only security scanners which do not use X-ray technology are added to the list of authorised methods for passenger screening at EU airports. All other technologies, such as that used for mobiles phones and others, can be used provided that they comply with EU security standards.

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