

Biometric facial-recognition technology takes off at German airports

For the first time in history, passengers at Hamburg Airport can now pass through security and boarding check posts without a boarding pass or smartphone.



Source: 123RF

This, thanks to the Star Alliance biometric face field recognition system which has been launched following a successful pilot phase.

With the new service, participating passengers from Austrian, SWISS and Lufthansa are able to pass through vital security points at the airport seamlessly, and most importantly, contact-less.

How does it work?

Interested participants of the loyalty programme Miles & More need to register once for Star Alliance Biometrics at least 24 hours before their next Austrian, Lufthansa or SWISS flight. To do so, they need their valid passport and the latest version of the Lufthansa app or Miles & More app.

As soon as they have registered, they can pass through the central security checkpoint and the boarding gates A17 and C16 at Hamburg Airport without contact.

The entrances at the gate and at the fast lanes of the central-security checkpoint are clearly marked.

Their face is automatically captured by the camera installed there and compared with their stored image. The travelers can keep their mouth-nose coverings, which they currently have to wear in the terminal for health protection. If there is a positive match, the entrances open automatically.

Register one time, use multiple times

The Star Alliance Biometrics platform, on which the technology is based, was already successfully launched in November 2020 at the Frankfurt, Munich and Vienna hubs with the aim of providing passengers with a seamless travel experience. Hamburg Airport is thus the fourth participating airport. Once registered, passengers can use biometric access at all participating airports.

The identification solution used in Star Alliance Biometrics is powered by NEC I: Delight facial recognition technology from Japan's NEC Corporation and is available to Miles & More participants who have agreed to the use of their biometric data during the travel process.

Data protection and security

Personal data, such as photos and other identifiers, are encrypted and stored securely within the platform.

The system has been developed from the outset in compliance with applicable data-protection laws and based on the latest facial recognition technology. The storage of personal data is kept to a necessary minimum. For example, no customer names are stored.



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“We are delighted that Lufthansa, Austrian and SWISS are now also offering Star Alliance facial recognition at Hamburg Airport,” says Mirjam Fröhlich, head of passenger and baggage management at Hamburg Airport.

“This is a plus in convenience for participating passengers entering the security checkpoint and at selected gates. The new technology offers additional time savings and makes the checking process at central points of the airport even smoother, which is just what our passengers want.”

Falk Durm, Lufthansa Group's head of ground and airport experience emphasizes: "In the Lufthansa Group, biometric offers will increasingly provide for simplified and more efficient contactless processes at the airports and thus significantly improve the travel experience of our passengers. I am pleased that we can now also offer our guests Star Alliance Biometrics in Hamburg after the successful start in Frankfurt, Munich and Vienna.”

Star Alliance VP Customer Experience, Christian Draeger added, “We are delighted to expand our state-of-the-art Star Alliance Biometrics to Hamburg Airport. We welcome more passengers to the future of air travel that is inspired by contactless and seamless experiences.

“We are committed to the cause and are progressively widening our biometrics footprint. We hope to see more member airlines and partner airports adopt the technology in the times to come.”

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