



**German  
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## **Security Threats Germany**

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## Automatic Face-Recognition

In May 2017, police in the United Kingdom used a system for automatic face-recognition at this years Champions League final in Cardiff and were able to achieve an immediate success. One person could be arrested. The British police currently have a database of approximately 500,000 relevant personal images, which were compared with people in the vicinity of the stadium during this first test and led to an immediate search success.

In Germany, the Minister of the Interior De Maiziere would like to use face recognition in the future as part of the enlargement and supplementation of the video surveillance improvement legislation, which has just been adopted, in order to identify and, if necessary, apprehend more potential terrorists and other offenders. He announced that there would be a trial run with volunteers at the Südkreuz station in Berlin to test the recognition software. This initiative of Minister De Maiziere, became public just days after the Bundestag approved the extension of the use of the electronic ID card. In the future, the electronic ID function contained in it shall work as a standard feature. This will allow the authorities a comprehensive evaluation and use of digitized biometric passport images.

Such developments are in principle welcome, as they promise considerable prospects for success in the fight against terrorism and crime. However, the legislator must provide clear rules for dealing with this new and very powerful technology. Already, the Chaos Computer Club warns about "a step towards a comprehensive and barely controlled surveillance".

In this context, German independent data protection authorities concluded at their conference in March 2017 that there is currently no legal basis for the use of this technology in Germany. The existing standards currently only allow the use of technical means for pure image recording, but not for further data processing operations of captured images.

In contrast to the active video surveillance by policemen which is already permissible today, people with this new technology can not only be observed, but can also be automatically identified during the monitoring by means of stored reference images. This also provides the possibility of a permanent control over the whereabouts of persons and supplementary information about other persons they are in contact with.

Security has a price, but it also counteracts the fundamental privacy rights of citizens - The citizens want security but do not want to see their privacy violated in return. However, one does not exclude the other when policy clearly and publicly explains when and how this technology is used and what the benefits are.

To this end, the government must proactively inform the public and provide detailed information on how to ensure that these technologies are not used improperly by the government - or in case of unauthorized access to such data - by third parties. If this is done, citizens will certainly recognize and accept the added value of this technology.

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