

New CCTV technology helps prevent terror attacks

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Numerous CCTV systems are in use in public places which have the capacity to gather large amounts of image material. For the time being, however, there are no effective ways to analyze the mass of video data automatically and recognize potential risk situations in advance. Finnish VTT is involved in an EU research project aimed at developing IT solutions to this end.

A risk may be posed, for example, by luggage left in a public place which may contain explosives or other dangerous substances. Terror attacks based on this tactic have already claimed many civilian lives. Luggage surveillance is particularly important at airports, railway stations, trade fairs, and public spaces in nationally significant infrastructure.

The aim of the SUBITO project, which is funded by the European Commission, is to improve image analysis technology in existing CCTV systems. With the help of an application developed as part of the project, cameras recognise abandoned luggage automatically and rapidly identify, locate and track the person who left it there.

The new application has significant commercial potential, since it can be used to exploit image material before any incident takes place.

During the project, VTT has developed tools for using smart cameras more effectively.

Security authorities can move any abandoned luggage quickly aside should they conclude that it poses a potential risk. The luggage can be transferred to the trade fair's or airport's lost property office, for example, if it proves no more than a false alarm.

SUBITO enhances security in a cost-efficient manner, since the new technology can be built onto the foundations of existing CCTV systems. Individual privacy issues are thus easier to take into account, because the end users must already take note of them in operating the system.

Effective CCTV surveillance strengthens deterrence: often, awareness alone of strengthened surveillance is enough to improve security in public places.

Ten partner organisations from six European countries are involved in the SUBITO project. The partners are experts in the field, from research institutes, universities, businesses and end users.

The project continues through to the end of next year and is being realised in close co-operation with end users. The aim is to ensure that security authorities have access to the technology that meets their needs.

Provided by VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland

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