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New robot on duty at Frankfurt Airport

2019/10/07 10:59 στην κατηγορία INTERNATIONAL

Passengers at Frankfurt Airport were recently introduced to a member of staff with a difference – YAPE the robot.

In a recent trial, self-driving guide robot YAPE moved through Frankfurt Airport, accompanying passengers to their gates and helping them to transport their small luggage.

YAPE is an AI-based transport and delivery robot developed by Yape Srl (the acronym stands for Your Autonomous Pony Express), a company of Italian hi-tech manufacturer e-Novia.

Airport operator Fraport and e-Novia deployed the little vehicle in FRA's transit area for five days.

Alexander Laukenmann, who heads the airside and terminal management unit at Fraport AG, said: "As a leader in innovation, we constantly strive to push forward new digital technologies aimed at enhancing the travel experience for our passengers."



“Our aim with YAPE is to test which aspects of artificial intelligence and robotics can help to further improve the quality of services at Frankfurt Airport.”

Vincenzo Russi, CEO of e-Novia, said: “YAPE can be deployed in the most diverse environments. After the trials with Japan Post and a major large-scale distributor in the US, YAPE now demonstrates its full potential by operating at a major aviation hub.

“Air traffic represents one of the prime drivers of the global economy. With our expertise in AI and robotics – of which YAPE is one of the best examples – e-Novia is developing new solutions for smart mobility and last-mile delivery.”

During the trials in Pier A of FRA’s Terminal 1, the project co-ordinators closely monitored YAPE. In this initial phase, a smartphone app was used to interact with the robot.

Passengers placed their small luggage in the robot’s luggage compartment and let YAPE guide them to their gates.

The robot is able to freely move throughout the terminal thanks to its integrated navigation system. In the next phase the compact robot will interact autonomously with passengers.

YAPE can carry up to 30 kilos at a speed of about six kilometres per hour indoors. Since the self-driving electric robot senses its surroundings, it is able to circumvent obstacles. Nevertheless -with more than 69 million passengers passing through Frankfurt Airport yearly- the busy terminals present a special challenge for the smart robot.

By trialing the autonomous transport robot, airport operator Fraport aims to test new ways of enhancing the passenger experience, while at the same time reducing staff workload.

(ACI Europe)