

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0354/10

by Renate Weber (ALDE), Sonia Alfano (ALDE), Baroness Sarah Ludford (ALDE), Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (ALDE) and Nadja Hirsch (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Failed Slovak civil aviation security test and compatibility with EU law

While airport security is being stepped up in many countries following an alleged plot to bomb an airliner over the US city of Detroit on 25 December, a failed airport security test ended up with an innocent Slovak man unwittingly carrying hidden explosives in his luggage on a flight to Dublin. On 9 January 2010 the Slovak authorities placed nine bomb components in the bags of nine passengers at two airports, Bratislava and Poprad-Tatry. All the items were detected, except one of the two that had been placed in the bag of a passenger. While the sniffer dog found one explosive, the police officer in charge failed to remove the second, which was not detected by the dog; 90 grams of RDX plastic explosive consequently travelled undetected through security at Poprad-Tatry Airport onto a Danube Wings aircraft. As a consequence, the unwitting passenger, Stefan Gonda, a 49-year-old Slovak electrician who lives in Ireland and was returning from his Christmas holidays, had his house in Dublin raided and was detained for several hours before the police released him without charge on Tuesday. After being informed by the Slovaks only 3 days later, the Irish authorities shut down a major Dublin intersection and evacuated people from buildings as Irish army experts examined the explosive. Security experts said the Dublin episode illustrates the inadequacy of the screening of checked-in luggage and condemned the planting of explosives in the luggage of a passenger, instead of using a police agent. Is the Commission aware of this extremely serious incident? Are such operations in conformity with EU law on security in civil aviation, notably in relation to the fact that innocent passengers are used without their knowledge or consent for security tests, that the authorities do not inform each other about such tests and that aviation and passenger security is put at risk as a result?