Schiphol Airport

At airports, the comfort of travellers and a pleasant, efficient travel experience are key concerns. At the same time, an airport has to deal with strict security measures.

Access control revolves around stability.

'Schiphol has been using the Nedap access control system for more than twenty years. We use the system for giving access to the employees of the 500 companies at the airport and the vehicles that move between landside and airside. We don't just have access control on the door, but also over other system applications, such as border exchange doors, lifts, barriers and passageways that we open and close from the security centre. Stability is the key word here.'

Peter the Bruijn *Senior functional manager of Schiphol Airport*

'Basically it comes down to the fact that those who may enter, can enter. And those who may not enter, are also denied access.' Speaking is Annemiek Whittaker, manager of access control systems and active for more than thirty years at Schiphol in the field of access control. 'I started here with issuing access cards and have now been supervisor of the department for quite some time, which among other things is responsible for the installation and maintenance of the entire access control system, including the system for the production/issuance of the passes that come with it.'

Granting and controlling central access
The department is part of Schiphol's security organisation and it includes, among others, the use of Nedap's AEOS system. 'We use the system for giving access to the employees of the 500 companies at the airport and the vehicles that move between landside and airside', says Peter de Bruijn, who as senior functional manager has experienced first hand the developments of the past two decades. He continues: 'We don't just have access control on the door. We also have other system applications, such as border exchange doors, the lifts, barriers and passageways that we open and close from the security centre.'

Increasing controllability
Whittaker explains that in her opinion the updates of existing systems and the purchase of new ones should remain limited to a minimum. 'Actually, we've only recently just gone over to a new system because the old one was at the end of its life, technically.' De Bruijn adds: 'If we came up against a limit within our old system, then we developed a shell around this ourselves in order to achieve the required functionality. But at a certain point – we are talking about 2009 – that became too complex from a technical control point of view and the switch to AEOS then followed.'

Migrating without disruption
The most important requirements that Schiphol set at the time for the new system were that it must be at the least equivalent to the old one, that it had to be compliant with the systems and resources at Schiphol that were being used in combination with the old system and that the migration would not disrupt the operations. Due to the fact that the processes at Schiphol may not be shut down, even for a moment, and the technology is very advanced, the migration stretched out over a period of three years and was completed in 2012.

Improving products
Each step in that process was thoroughly tested. De Bruijn: 'We operate a system that has proven itself over the years. And that means that nothing here goes live without it first having gone through our own test lab. It may involve a new release of an operational system but also the implementation of a completely new system. We do this in order to be ahead of operational problems.'
Whittaker: 'In that, we're unique. It's an integration test, in which we test everything from beginning to end, from the production and issuance of the pass through to the control of the passageways. It's essential that a door that must remain closed also actually remains closed, and opens when that is the intention. When testing a new release we sometimes encounter issues that Nedap actively takes up in order to improve its product. For us this is an important part of our relationship. After all, at Schiphol it's all about stability.'

Increasing efficiency
Whittaker's experiences are also positive on other points. For example, the current system is more user friendly and more logical than the old one.

'Moreover, we've gone from 450 door configurations to 20, which makes the control a lot easier. And we've opted for standardization, which has resulted in an improvement in efficiency.'
De Bruijn adds: 'In case of an new release, we now only have to test 20 designs. That makes an enormous difference.'

> "Due to AEOS, we've been able to reduce the number of door configurations from 450 to 20, which makes the control a lot easier."

Scalability for the future

The world of aviation was and is dynamic. Quality, comfort and efficiency are key for a 'mainport' like Schiphol. That's why, over the coming years, Schiphol is investing about 1.5 million euros per day in even more quality and expansion of the capacity. De Bruijn: 'That also includes, for example, a substantial increase in the number of staff passageways where a pass has to be used. Owing to the flexibility and the scalability of our system we're able to easily handle this. It all has to be ready in 2018. But we can continue to grow in a stable manner until that time', concludes Whittaker.

> "Owing to the flexibility and scalability of our access control system, we're easily able to handle a sizeable increase in the number of staff passageways."