

GERMANY DISCOVERS WHAT SELF-CHECK OUT IS ... 10 YEARS AFTER THE REST OF THE WORLD

"This is a very new feature. Word hasn't really spread about it yet," an employee at the shop explained.

Slowly though, self-service terminals are becoming more common throughout the Bundesrepublik. While in 2015 some 295 businesses nationwide had the terminals installed, by November last year 488 shops were making use of them, a [recent study by the EHI Retail Institute](#) in Cologne shows.

"The significant increase within just two years shows how important this technology is becoming for German retailers," Frank Horst, author of the study, said in a statement.

But the technology is still very much in its infancy in Germany. While there are roughly 200,000 cashiers in food stores across the country, there are still only 1,450 self-service terminals.

Supermarket Rewe is considered a trailblazer in Germany because it started trialling self-service checkouts way back in 2012. It now has a grand total of 62 self-service terminals across its 3,500 stores.

But Rewe spokesman Thomas Bonrath has reassured Germans that the technology won't sweep over them all at once.

"We aren't planning a wholesale roll out, we will just be deploying them selectively," he told the HA.

So why have Germans been so slow to pick up on a technology that was [first rolled out in other countries in the last century](#)?

For Martin Fassnacht, a professor at the WHU business school in Düsseldorf, the answer is simple.

"Germans find it particularly difficult to get used to new things," he said explaining why self-service checkout has long since established itself in France, the UK and Sweden but not in Deutschland.

"Many Germans simply don't see the point," he told the HA.

But, according to a spokeswoman for the the trade union Ver.di, Germans are also wise to the fact that the self-service checkouts are at least partly an attempt by supermarkets to load them with more work while reducing costs.