

FAQs - New German ID Card

General

1) How to change from the old ID card to the new one?

The new Law on Identification Cards came into effect on 1 November 2010. Since then, citizens can apply for the new document only. All the old ID cards will continue to be valid until they reach their expiry date. However, citizens can apply for a new ID card at any time.

2) Do other countries already have similar documents?

Yes, and these documents are becoming increasingly more widespread throughout the world. In the European Union, for instance, citizens in Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Austria, Portugal and Spain already have electronic ID cards. However, these cards, which are also referred to as citizen cards, are rooted in other technical infrastructures and therefore cannot be fully compared to the German system.

3) What does the new ID card cost?

Pursuant to the Federal Ministry of the Interior's current fee ordinance, the new ID card costs €28.80. A reduction is available for applicants under the age of 24: for a first-time application, they pay a reduced fee of €22.80.

4) How long is the new ID card valid?

The new ID card is valid for ten years for document holders over the age of 24. The period of validity for younger document holders is six years.

Security Chip

5) Why is there a chip in the new ID card?

The chip is where the personal information, such as name, address and date of birth, is digitally stored and the document holder can make this information available for the online ID function. The additionally stored biometric data of the facial image (mandatory) and the

fingerprints (voluntary) ensures that the document cannot be forged and guarantees that it can be used as a valid travel document in the Schengen territory.

6) Can the ID card holder check the data stored on the chip?

Yes. In order to warrant complete data transparency for each and every citizen, all ID card agencies have been supplied with reading devices that have been certified by the German Federal Office for Information Security (BSI). Agency staff can use these modules to display all of the personal data stored on the chip, including the digital passport photo and, where applicable, the stored fingerprints.

Photo

7) What should the photo look like?

The photo, also called passport photo, is printed onto the card body and stored in electronic form on the chip. The photo must comply with the following conditions:

- The photo must be recent.
- The face must be centred and uncovered in such a way that it is recognisable (facing forward, not in profile).
- Head coverings that do not obscure the face are accepted on religious grounds.
- The eyes must be open and clearly visible.
- Exceptions may be permitted, e.g. for medical reasons.

For further information regarding the requirements, go to: www.bmi.bund.de and to the Bundesdruckerei website (sample photos).

Fingerprint

8) What is the purpose of storing fingerprints?

The additional storage of two fingerprints on the security chip of the new ID card is entirely voluntary. The fingerprint data is used exclusively for sovereign ID functions. This feature allows ID card holders to identify themselves during border controls and in their own country, for instance, in dealings with the police. Just like the digital photo, the stored biometric fingerprint data strengthens the link between the ID document and its holder. This reduces the risk of identity fraud.

9) Who is authorised to read out fingerprints?

Only officially authorised bodies, such as the ID-card and passport agencies, law enforcement authorities and the customs administration are permitted to read out biometric data pursuant to German data protection legislation. The data forms part of the sovereign ID function. Service providers cannot read out the biometric data within the scope of the online ID function.

10) What happens if an ID card holder does not want to give his fingerprints?

Nothing at all. The fingerprint data is only included in the document when explicitly requested by the ID card holder. If a citizen does not want this, the new ID card is then issued with all the options for electronic ID but without fingerprint data in the chip.

11) Where are the fingerprints stored?

The fingerprint data remains at the ID card office until the citizen collects his new ID card. The data is then irrevocably deleted and is now only stored on the security chip of the ID card. Bundesdruckerei, which produces the new ID card, does not store the fingerprints either. German law does not permit ID card data to be stored.

Qualified Electronic Signature

12) How can users sign online with the new signature function?

The new ID card has been prepared for use with the qualified electronic signature (QES) which, in legal terms, is equivalent to a hand-written signature. Anybody can use the signature function of the new card once they have a valid signature certificate.

13) What is a signature certificate?

The signature certificate can be obtained from an authorised signature provider (also known as a certification service provider). A list of providers can be found on the Federal Network Agency website (www.nrca-ds.de) under "Accredited certification service providers". The signature certificate must be loaded onto the new ID card.

14) How to obtain a valid signature certificate?

Signature certificates are exclusively available from specialised trust centers or certification service providers (CSPs) rather than from ID card agencies. Costs differ here depending on the provider. A list of accredited CSPs in Germany is available on the website of the Federal Network Agency at: www.nrca-ds.de, under "Accredited certification service providers". In order to integrate a signature certificate, the online ID function of the new ID card must be active. An advanced reader with an integrated PIN pad is additionally required.

15) What happens to the QES if the ID card is lost?

The loss of a new ID card with an activated signature function must be reported immediately to the respective trust center so that the applications booked can be revoked. The local ID card offices cannot revoke the signature function even when the ID card holder reports the loss to his office.

16) What is needed in order to use the signature function?

The online ID function must be activated in order to use a QES. A special signature certificate and a reader are also required. Costs can vary from one provider to the next.

Online ID function

17) What is the online ID function?

The online ID function of the new ID card can be used by the holder to prove his or her identity in electronic communications. Such services can include, for instance, online services offered by private companies, such as online shops or insurance companies. Time-consuming completion of forms, having to go to public agencies or entering personal data are now a thing of the past. Since more and more Internet service providers are offering personalised services, the online ID function will make life much easier, safer and more convenient. A list of services currently available can be found at:

<http://www.ccepa.de/onlineanwendungen>.

18) How can the online ID function be used?

In order to use the new ID card as ID on the Internet, the online ID function must already be activated.

19) Does the holder of an ID card have to use the online ID function?

Use of the online ID function is voluntary and is extremely flexible. The ID card holder alone decides whether or not to use this function. As long as the ID card is valid, the online ID function can be activated or deactivated at any time by the agency in charge. When the online ID function is deactivated, the new ID card cannot be used on the Internet.

20) Does the online ID function have to be activated immediately?

No, the function can be activated or deactivated at any time. However, the new ID card must still be valid. A fee of EUR 6 is charged when the function is activated at a later point in time. On the other hand, no fee is charged if the function is activated when the holder collects the new ID card or deactivated at a later point in time.

21) What kind of technical equipment is needed to use the online ID function?

To use the function in combination with a PC, the following is needed: a) A commercially available reading device for cards with contactless chips that has been approved by the German Federal Office for Information Security. A logo printed on the reader usually indicates whether the device is compatible with the new ID card. b) Software that enables the card to communicate with the computer. This kind of software, e.g. the AusweisApp, can be downloaded free of charge from www.ausweisapp.bund.de.

22) Which providers accept the online ID function?

The online ID function is designed to simplify identification and registration in conjunction with electronic services. Such services can include, for instance, online services by private companies, such as online shops or insurance companies. However, providers in the public administration (e.g. online citizens' services) may also use the functionalities of the new ID card for their tasks. The online ID function can be used for all providers who offer electronic ID in conjunction with their services. There are, however, still services offered on the Internet that were not automatically updated at the time the new ID card was introduced. A list of services can be found at: <http://www.ccepa.de/onlineanwendungen>.

23) Can the online ID function be used on the Internet only?

No, the online ID function is not exclusively designed for use on the Internet. It is also to be used at vending machines (for instance, tickets), when renting cars and bicycles, or when checking into hotels.

Data security

24) Is the data safe?

The data is encrypted for each transmission. All information and data transfers are protected by internationally recognised and established encryption methods. Every provider who wishes to use the new ID card for his service must apply to the Issuing Office for Authorisation Certificates for a corresponding government authorisation certificate. The Issuing Office checks, on the basis of strict requirements, which data is absolutely necessary in order to perform the service and issues authorisation for precisely this data only. Employers, for instance, have no access to this data. The new ID card makes electronic communications and online transactions more secure. The new functions of the new ID card protect the personal data. The online ID function checks whether the online provider is in fact who he claims to be.

25) What is the purpose of providing ID with the online ID function?

Identification using the online ID function is offered as a secure and user-friendly alternative to current registration methods. New services and offers will also be introduced which were not possible up to now without a standard form of ID for the online world or which could not be completely handled online. The online ID function can, for instance, replace the PostIdent method used in Germany. Confirmation of ID is now possible in a simpler and faster manner than before. In order to offer the online function with the new ID card, each provider must obtain government authorisation.

26) Why are online transactions more secure with the online ID function?

Thanks to the online ID function, both the user and the service provider can rest assured that the other party is in fact who they claim to be. At the user end, possession of the new ID card and knowledge of the PIN guarantee this. But the service provider too must also confirm his identity. Only those providers who have been screened by the Issuing Office for Authorisation Certificates are given the technical means to request ID data from their users. The Issuing Office for Authorisation Certificates checks each individual service in order to determine which data categories of the ID document the service provider may access.

27) Which personal data must be disclosed when using the online ID function?

The online ID function allows all holders of an ID card to be very thrifty with their personal data. The Issuing Office for Authorisation Certificates at the Federal Office of Administration ensures that providers of electronic services are only given the data which they need for their service. Thanks to the new ID card, it is the user who decides when to grant access and to whom. Moreover, the holder of the ID card must also confirm each data transmission to a service provider by entering a 6-digit PIN.

28) How can the online ID function be disabled?

ID card holders can call the following hotline: 0180-1-33 33 33 (24/7; 3.9 ct. per minute from a German land line, 42 ct. max. per minute from a mobile phone - also diallable from abroad) in order to have their online ID function disabled. Alternatively, the issuing authority or the office in charge can disable the function.

Data thriftiness

29) What is access under a pseudonym?

After registering for the first time on a social network and creating a user profile, holders of the new ID card can log on in future without disclosing private data. The system "recognises" the user. The chip of the new ID card generates a pseudonym for the respective service provider which the holder can use to identify himself but which does not provide access to any personal data. Together with the 6-digit PIN, this method is just the same as the familiar log-on procedure but much more secure.

30) How does access under a pseudonym work?

The provider can recognise the user on the basis of a distinct card feature without the personal data being transmitted (pseudonym). This distinct character sequence of the new ID card has no meaning for other service providers. "Access under a pseudonym" therefore does not mean that a user name and an e-mail address are stored on the new ID card. Together with the 6-digit PIN, this method is just as easy as the previously used log-on procedure but much more secure because no personal data is transmitted.

31) What is verification of age?

Some providers of online services only need to know whether a user has reached a certain age. In cases like these, the service provider can use the age verification function. This is used, for instance, on cigarette machines or for online services with adult content. Instead of transmitting the complete date of birth to the service provider, all that the ID card transmits is whether its holder has reached the required age (16 or 18).

32) What is verification of place of residence?

The same procedure as with age verification can also be used when a supplier offers his services in a certain region only and hence needs to know whether a user is registered in the relevant area. In this case too, the answer is merely "Yes" or "No". Both functionalities are designed to ensure and guarantee that only the data that is absolutely needed is disclosed.

PIN

33) What is the PIN letter?

Applicants who have applied for a new ID card are sent a so-called PIN letter by the card producer before it is time to collect the card. This letter contains the 5-digit transport PIN, the unblocking number (PUK) and a disable password.

34) What is the PIN?

The 5-digit PIN is a transport PIN and must be replaced with a private 6-digit PIN when the new ID card is received. This can be carried out at home using a card reader or at the ID card office. The PIN can be changed any number of times. This 6-digit PIN must be entered each time the ID card holder uses the online ID function.

35) What's important when choosing a new PIN?

Each ID card holder should take care not to choose an easy to guess number sequence (e.g. "123456") nor to use any number combination printed on the card. As with a Maestro card, the PIN should never be noted on the new ID card nor should it be kept together with the card.

36) What happens if the ID card holder enters the wrong PIN?

After entering the wrong PIN a second time, the user is requested to enter his access number. This number can be found on the front of the new ID card. If the wrong PIN is entered three times, the online function is disabled for security reasons. The only way for this to be reactivated is if the holder enters the unblocking number (PUK) or if the PIN is reset at the ID card agency. The PUK is a 10-digit number which the user receives in the PIN letter together with the 5-digit transport PIN and the disable password. It is advisable not to scratch the PUK free until it is really needed. Unlike the PIN, the PUK can only be used up to ten times. The PUK is only known to the respective ID card holder and should be kept in a safe place which cannot be accessed by others.

37) What happens if the user forgets his PIN?

The PIN can be reset at the public authority. The holder must present the ID document for resetting.

PUK

38) What is the PUK (personal unblocking key)?

The PIN becomes blocked after three incorrect entries. The PUK is used to cancel this blocking.

39) What is the disable password?

If the new ID card is stolen or otherwise lost, the card must be blocked just like with a Maestro card. The disable password is used for this purpose. This is an easy-to-remember word (e.g. train) which is sent to the ID card holder in the PIN letter along with the transport PIN and PUK. The disable password is only known to the ID card holder and the issuing authority.

40) What is the disable hotline?

When a new ID card is lost, the online ID function must be disabled. This can be carried out by calling the hotline: 0180-1-33 33 33 (24/7; 3.9 ct. per minute from a German land line, 42 ct. max. per minute from a mobile phone - also diallable from abroad). The caller must give his name, date of birth and the disable password. The ID card agency in charge must also be

informed about the loss of the new ID card. Alternatively, the ID card agency can be contracted directly in order to report the loss of the new ID card.

41) Information protection

Under no circumstances should the PIN, PUK or disable password be noted on the new ID card nor should they be kept together with the card.

For more FAQs and information concerning the new ID card, please visit the website of the Federal Ministry of the Interior as well as www.personalausweisportal.de.

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